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A
METHODIST
PIONEER

*Life and Ministry
of
John Green*

REV. C. H. CROOKSHANK, M. A.



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A METHODIST PIONEER.

A METHODIST PIONEER:

THE LIFE AND LABOURS OF

JOHN SMITH.

INCLUDING

*BRIEF NOTICES OF THE ORIGIN AND EARLY
HISTORY OF METHODISM IN DIFFERENT
PARTS OF THE NORTH OF IRELAND.*

BY THE

REV. CHARLES H. CROOKSHANK, M.A.



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To the Memory of the First Methodist Preachers.

While heroes claim the palm, and poets sing
The sapient statesman, and the patriot king ;
While beauty, genius, wit, by turns demand
The sculptor's labour and the painter's hand ;
While wondering crowds loud acclamations raise,
And earth reverberates with the favourite's praise ;
Shall nobler Christians, in a Christian age,
Have no memorial in affection's page ?
Shall ceaseless vigils, persecutions, strife ;
The sacrifice of ease, of health, of life ;
Have no distinction grateful ? no record ?
Yes ! valiant champions of a heavenly Lord,
As long as patience, resignation, love,
Are praised by saints below and saints above ;
Ye sufferers meek ! who pain and scoffs defied,
Who warned and wept, endured, and prayed, and died,
Ye shall be honoured !
Ye braved the ruffian blow, the infuriate clan,
And all for love to God, and love to man !
O with what triumph hailed in realms on high,
When angels bore you to your kindred sky !
Fruits of His purchase, to the Saviour given,
And owned the servants of the Lord of heaven.
On all your sons may your bless'd mantle fall,
The zeal that fired, the love that reached to all !
Your scorn of earthly honours, earthly gain,
Of toil, of malice, ignominy, pain !
Where'er they sojourn or where'er they stray,
May heaven's own light direct them on their way ;
Till late translated to the choir above,
They greet their fathers in the world of love !

SARAH WESLEY.



A METHODIST PIONEER.

INTRODUCTION.

THE subject of this narrative was one of a noble band of brave and faithful Evangelists who, during the third quarter of the last century, travelled up and down, through the length and breadth of Ireland, calling sinners to repentance, and proclaiming the glad tidings of salvation. In cities, towns, and villages, in private houses and barns, in streets and market-places, wherever they could find any willing to hear, there they were ready 'to testify the Gospel of the grace of God.' Dependent for support on the kindness of those whose spiritual welfare they sought, they had to endure numerous privations; often having no home to call their own, the poorest cabins were their resting-places, and their food the humblest fare. Cruel was the treatment which they frequently received from those for whose good they laboured;

they were misrepresented and reproached, hissed and hooted, stoned and beaten, and many of them were hurried into premature graves.

Some of this goodly company of apostles were men of few talents and humble attainments, others were remarkable for ability and culture; as a class, they were 'mighty in the Scriptures,' powerful in prayer, and irresistible in appeal to the consciences of their hearers. Among them were included such well-known worthies as Robert Swindells, Thomas Walsh, Joseph Cownley, Thomas Olivers, and Christopher Hopper, fearless and faithful as the Tishbite.

Of the personal history of few of those devoted men has so little been published as that of John Smith, and yet there is not one of them to whose instrumentality so many conversions to God may be traced. To give a detailed and consecutive account of his life and successes, is now, it is to be feared, impossible, as the records available are scanty and scattered, and such a length of time has elapsed since his death. Yet it is due to his memory, to Irish Methodism, and to the Church of God, to collect, arrange, and publish even such scraps of information as can be culled, and thus rescue his name, and, as far as possible, his work, from oblivion.

Mr. Wesley required from his preachers a written account of their conversion to God and their Christian work. This, for reasons which will appear in

the sequel, he did not request from John Smith himself, but from his son. In 1771, at Derryanvil, Mr. Wesley asked David Smith to take down in writing from his father the circumstances of his conversion and history. This, he says, he half-promised to do; but, having entered the army soon after, he failed to comply with the request. Mr. Wesley wrote, reminding him of his promise, urging him to fulfil it, and adding that God would make it a means of blessing to his own soul. But owing to lack of sympathy at the time with work of such a sacred character, it was still neglected. After his conversion, and when his father had been twenty-six years dead, David recollected the request and the promise, and wrote out from memory a very brief and imperfect account of his father's life; yet narrating its most remarkable incidents. With this narrative have been incorporated in the following pages references to John Smith and the results of his work gleaned from the journals of those with whom he was associated, and the obituaries of some of the many who received good from his labours; the whole being viewed in the light given by the history of Methodism in the places and at the period in which he lived. Incidents are here recorded which may be regarded by some as incredible; but it should be remembered that not only were these very circumstances firmly believed by John Smith himself, who narrated them to his son, but they were also well known and received as

authentic at the time of their occurrence. Whatever difference of opinion, however, there may be in regard to these, there can be none as to the deep piety, fervid zeal and great success of this preacher of the Gospel. He was a follower of Christ of a rare type. May the Head of the Church multiply Evangelists of this stamp! If they abound we shall not despair of seeing a converted world. May some who read, catch the spirit of John Smith, and go forth to work for Christ,

‘Strong in the strength which God supplies
Through His eternal Son’!



CHAPTER I.

EARLY HISTORY AND CONVERSION.

JOHAN SMITH was born at Clare, near Tanderagee, in the county of Armagh, about the year 1713. His father, a native of Scotland, had settled in Ireland about twenty years previously, had taken a small farm, and engaged in 'the linen business,' most likely as a weaver: the practice of cultivating a piece of land and working at a trade at the same time, being usual in the North of Ireland. His children were brought up in the doctrinal teaching of the Presbyterian Church, of which he and his wife were members.

John appears to have been a brave, ardent and generous lad, passionately fond of youthful diversions, and the leader of every bold and perilous enterprise. He cannot be said to have received even an elementary education, as he only learnt to read the New Testament and the Psalms, and never mastered the art of writing. The family being

large and their means small, he was sent to learn a trade when only eleven years old; and consequently had but little opportunity of attending school—a circumstance which he rejoiced in at the time, but subsequently deeply deplored. Having completed the term of his apprenticeship, influenced by a love of adventure and desire for a more wild and daring career, he enlisted in the army, and joined his regiment, which was quartered in England; but the strict discipline of military service was ill-suited to a spirit impatient of control. So, at the end of about twelve months, he obtained his discharge, and began to roam through the country, supporting himself by working at his trade. His associates encouraged him in a course of folly and sin. Yet in all these wicked wanderings the Spirit of God strove with him, bringing to mind the religious truths learnt in youth; and so sharp were the stings of conscience, that more than once he was on the verge of putting an end to his life.

At length this wayward young man returned to Ireland, and settled for a number of years in Newry. About 1738 he married; but home influence had no restraint for him. He wandered further from God, and plunged more deeply into sin. His fearless and fiery spirit could do nothing by halves; he pressed forward in his wicked career with energy and zest, regardless of the laws of God or man. He became the ringleader of a gang of desperadoes, given to intemperance, gambling, blasphemy, boxing

cock-fighting and the like, the pests of the town and neighbourhood. Numerous warrants were issued for his apprehension; but such were his physical strength, the character for desperation which he bore, and the strong faction by whom he was surrounded, that the authorities failed to seize him. Yet even when thus sunk in the lowest depths of vice, he was not abandoned by the Holy Spirit. In his inmost soul there was the consciousness of the evil of his course, sometimes unfelt in the wild excitement of sinful sports, but at other times arousing his slumbering conscience, and presenting appalling views of the terrible end to which he was hastening. He was unwilling, or unable, to remain long in one place, and for years was, with his family, in a most unsettled state. On two or three occasions, in his restless wanderings after rest, he heard some of the early Methodist itinerants preach in the streets; but at the time little impression was made on his conscience. Some time afterwards, however, the remembrance of the solemn truths which they had proclaimed arose in his mind.

One morning, when returning home after a night spent in gambling, he came to the entrance of a bog, and looking beyond it saw his house, as he believed, on fire; the flames bursting through the roof and windows, and the smoke rising in one huge column to the heavens. Filled with horror and trepidation at the thought of his wife and children being burnt to death, he rushed straight

forward out of the proper path, and fell into the bog: attempting to rise, he fell again; and thus running and falling, leaping and plunging, with the terrific vision of the burning homestead before his eyes, the brave man, almost frantic, struggled to reach his destination. At length as he came to the house the fire suddenly disappeared, and on entering he found all safe and the children in bed asleep. He fell immediately on his knees, thanked God for His compassionate warning, and resolved never to play cards again—a resolution strictly adhered to.

A few months afterwards he received another and still more impressive warning. On a Sunday morning early, as he lay in bed, he saw one of his companions in sin standing close to him, with eyes fixed on him earnestly. He heard him say, 'John Smith, John Smith, I am this moment called before God—a dreadful God. He has weighed me in the balances, and I am found wanting. Fly for your life, and escape the damnation of hell!' Mrs. Smith also recognized the man's person and voice, and called him by name; but he, without reply, vanished. John Smith immediately arose, saying, 'I must go to his house, he is dead.' He went, and on arriving was told that the man had died, as near as could be reckoned, at the hour at which Smith believed he saw and heard him at home. This incident had a most salutary effect on the mind and conduct of John Smith. He then entered on a new course of life, broke his connection with

every dissolute companion, and began to read God's Word, often spending hours over its sacred pages, although it was to him a sealed book, and he knew of no one to open the seal. He also began to attend again the services of the Presbyterian Church, from which for years he had absented himself; but all his efforts to overcome sin and quiet his conscience proved vain. The struggle was of unwonted intensity and very protracted.

One day, as he was walking in the field, groaning under the burden of sin, and seeing no means of deliverance, he thought, 'If I am to be lost I will perish on my knees'; so, kneeling down beside a hedge, he besought God to have mercy on him. As he prayed he heard a voice, as if close behind him, crying out, 'John Smith, you are a vessel of destruction, and will be eternally damned.' But he the more vehemently besought God to save him; till he heard another voice saying, 'Go, proclaim My Name to all around thee, and fear not; for I will be with thee.' Greatly encouraged by this, yet retaining an awful sense of his guilt and danger, he still strove to overcome the numerous temptations by which he was surrounded. In these conflicts, not having laid hold of Divine strength, he was often baffled. However, he struggled on; and, fearing the power of local associations, he in 1757 resolved to leave the town. He settled in Coote-hill.

In his new abode he began to conduct family

worship each evening. On one occasion the chapter which he began to read was Romans viii.; but on reading the first and second verses he suddenly stopped, started, as if he had received an electric shock, and roared in an agony, 'What shall I do! I am not in Christ Jesus, for I walk after the flesh, and not after the Spirit.' He then ran out, as if beside himself, to a fir grove near the house, and cried so vehemently for mercy that he was heard at a considerable distance. It seemed to him as if he were surrounded by evil spirits gloating over the terrible anguish of his soul. Exhausted both in body and mind, he grasped the trees for support, and strove to pray on, but could not; his mind was a blank. He continued in a most distressed state of mind for about three weeks, during which he scarcely ever slept, and took very little food. He went to every place that he could think of as being likely to afford relief to his distracted spirit—to the Presbyterian meeting, to the Episcopal church, to the Moravians, and to the Society of Friends, but all was of no avail; none understood his disease or could tell him of the cure. He needed a present, personal Redeemer, but they simply urged him to attend their religious ordinances and to live a moral life. Many said that he was mad; and others, that some demon had taken possession of him; but there was none to point him to 'the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.'

In the spring of 1758, Cootehill was first visited

by a Methodist Preacher; his name was Thomas Kead, a man whose heart was full of love to Christ and love for souls.* He took his stand in the street, and having sung a hymn and prayed, announced his text: 'Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.' Amongst those who gathered around the stranger was John Smith, who drank in every word. The sermon just met his case. He thought that the whole discourse was aimed at himself; it seemed to him as if the Preacher knew both his heart and life, so fully and truthfully did he describe his state and feelings. And when the Evangelist held forth the Lord Jesus as the only and all-sufficient Saviour, and proclaimed through Him forgiveness of sins to all that believe, the soul of the poor penitent was filled with wonder. He thought, 'And yet there can be no doubt about this. "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," even the "chief" of sinners. He "tasted death for every man;" He says,

* Of this devoted Evangelist there are only a few brief glimpses in Irish Methodistic history. He was a native of Ireland. He began to travel as a Preacher of the Gospel in 1750. In 1752 he was present in Limerick at the first Methodist Conference held in Ireland; at which time he was a married man, reference being made to a grant voted to his wife. He laboured in Dublin in 1762, assisting Mr. Wesley at Watch-Night Services, in April and July; and died in that city soon after, in the full triumph of faith.

“Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” The veil of unbelief was removed; the love of Christ burst upon his ravished vision, driving away all guilt and fear, and filling his soul with light, love, and joy. He could no more doubt his acceptance with God through Christ than he could his existence. The Gospel messenger spent nearly the whole of the remainder of the day with the young convert, giving him suitable instruction, and then they separated,—John Smith exulting in the possession of the pearl of great price, and the Evangelist rejoicing over this latest seal to his sacred ministry.



CHAPTER II.

CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP AND WORK.

JOHAN SMITH was now a new man—a wonder to himself, to his family, and to all who knew him. The old temptations returned, but in all he was more than conqueror through Him Who loved him. With a heart overfraught with gratitude, he eagerly seized every opportunity of telling others what a Saviour he had found. Good impressions were made on the minds of many: when, a short time after Smith's conversion, Mr. Wesley first visited Cootehill (May 22nd, 1758), and 'preached at seven in an open place near the street' (*Journal*), the congregation was 'tolerably serious.' And when again, on the following morning at six o'clock, the venerated founder of Methodism proclaimed the glad tidings of salvation, there were still more hearers, who 'seemed to feel as well as hear.'

On this occasion, Mr. Wesley was accompanied

by Mr. Robert Swindells,* and their visit led to the formation of a Methodist Society in the town, composed of a few persons, all in humble circumstances, who, as the result of the labours of Thomas Kead, John Smith, and Mr. Wesley, had 'a desire to flee from the wrath to come,' and 'to be saved from their sins.' Of this little company John Smith was in a short time appointed the leader. True, he was but recently converted, like themselves, and unskilled in the word of righteousness; but faith, perseverance in prayer, and the diligent study of the Word of God soon supplied all that was lacking.

If, however, these poor people by becoming Methodists enjoyed privileges unspeakably precious to them, they also exposed themselves to bitter persecution. Members of the different Churches in the town soon began to oppose the little band, cavilling at their opinions, questioning the sincerity of their professions, mocking them in their presence, and slandering them in their absence. Their malice, however, was chiefly directed against John Smith, not only as the most zealous of the Methodists, but especially as one on whose behalf numerous and remarkable deliverances were wrought. Hence he was called a demoniac, and charged, like his blessed

* He was one of the first Methodist preachers who visited Ireland, and was a man of deep piety, great zeal, and remarkable benevolence. He began to travel in 1741, and died in 1783.

Master, with being in league with the devil. But they did not confine themselves to malicious statements, they proceeded to use physical violence. They collected mobs, surrounded the place of meeting, seized the worshippers, knocked them down, beat them, and even dragged them through cess-pools and sewers. Still John Smith steadily and faithfully did his duty, never offering the slightest resistance, but rejoicing that he was 'counted worthy to suffer' for Christ's Name.

These severe trials were overruled by Providence for good. None joined the little band but such as were thoroughly in earnest and ready to endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, and the members of the Society were drawn still more closely together. Owing to the Divine blessing on the faithful labours of these devoted people, their meekness under provocation, and the integrity of their lives, several persons of a higher social position joined the Society, and others began to attend the public services, by whose influence open persecution was brought to an end. John Smith seized every opportunity of reproofing sin and calling sinners to repentance. He spared none, of whatever rank or position, who violated the law of God in his presence; for this he received not a few severe beatings. He spent at least six hours in every twenty-four in private prayer and reading the Bible; this was the means by which he obtained and retained his marvellous spiritual power. He

did not look to the Holy Spirit to supply that knowledge which can only be obtained by study, or to give skill in its use, which is only the result of faithful practice. Wesley's Hymns, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, *The Holy War*, *The Practice of Piety*, and *The Saints' Everlasting Rest* were his favourite books. These were made subservient to the great conflict with sin and Satan, of which he never lost sight. He sometimes termed them his 'small arms,' and the Bible his 'artillery.' He was most skilful in the use of the latter; he could sustain each statement that he made, and repel every objection, by a prompt appeal to the written Word.

On February 21st, 1760, a remarkable and well-authenticated incident occurred. John Smith had been engaged in prayer in a barn, from which he quickly returned home, greatly agitated, saying to his wife as he entered: 'Mary, the French have just landed in the North.' This was repeated, and it soon spread over the town, giving rise to considerable talk. One of the local authorities, having heard the report, sent for 'the seer,' and reprimanded him for disturbing the public tranquillity by exciting a needless alarm. He was asked how he could know that such an event had taken place, the town being distant from any Northern port. John Smith replied that he was sure his statement was correct, and he was willing to remain in custody till the fact should be ascertained. A few hours after this interview intelligence arrived that the

French Admiral, Thurot, had landed, at Carrickfergus, a body of soldiers, commanded by General Cavignac, who had taken possession of the town.

It afterwards appeared that Thurot had received one thousand men from the French King's guard, with orders to land them in the North of Ireland at the same time that M. de Conflans landed in the South. A storm had driven him up to Norway, from whence he could not get away till his ships were much damaged and his provisions consumed. Afterwards another storm drove him to 66° North latitude, whence he did not get back to Carrick Bay, till all on board were almost famished, having only an ounce of bread a day for each man. They then landed merely to procure provisions. As they marched into Carrickfergus the garrison fired on them, so that one of their generals was wounded, and a young marquis killed. The defenders of the castle then desired a parley, and agreed to furnish their assailants with provisions in six hours. This, however, they could not do, there not being enough in the town, so that they had to send to Belfast.

But the poor Frenchmen could not wait for this supply, and began to help themselves to whatever food was to be obtained. They were even glad of raw oats to satisfy the cravings of hunger, but they did not molest or offend man, woman, or child. Thurot himself said he had not slept nor tasted anything for forty-eight hours. After they returned to their ships they were detained in the bay five

days, by contrary winds, and the day after they sailed they were met by three English frigates, when an action ensued. Thurot and several of his men were killed, and the rest taken prisoners.

This time, when the terror of invasion filled the minds of the people, was regarded by John Smith as a favourable opportunity for calling them to flee to Christ for refuge : he hastened from house to house, warning the inmates of the danger of eternal death. No doubt the feeling excited in the town by the confirmation of his singular statement with regard to the French landing greatly added to his influence. So deep and general was the impression made by his labours, that when Mr. Wesley paid his second visit to Cootehill (May 13th, 1760), and preached in the Market-house, nearly all the Protestants in the town were present. (*Journal.*) More important good, however, than a mere interest in religious services resulted from the fervent efforts of John Smith ; great numbers were converted to God. Encouraged by these successes, he continued for some years earnestly and faithfully to work for Christ in his own neighbourhood. Some who then professed to receive spiritual good filled important and useful positions in the church. Thirty years after John Smith had passed home, some of the most devoted members of the Society at Cootehill referred to him as the instrument of their conversion.



CHAPTER III.

FERMANAGH: 1766—67.

A MORE extensive sphere of usefulness soon opened to John Smith, for which he was specially adapted. Mr. Wesley, having recognized in him a peculiar fitness for evangelistic work, and having ascertained that a large district of country, embracing the counties of Monaghan, Cavan, Fermanagh and Tyrone, was in a state of spiritual destitution, wrote, about the autumn of 1766, appointing him to work in this vast field as a Methodist preacher. John Smith, regarding this communication as a call from God, gave up business, and entered heartily into the work.

He commenced his labours in this new capacity in Fermanagh. In April, 1762, Mr. Wesley had passed through the county, *en route* from Cootehill to Sligo, and stopped a night at a place called Carrickbeg; but it does not appear that Methodism had

gained any footing in this district of country. The first place visited by John Smith was Tonyloman, about five miles south of Enniskillen. During the first service which he held there, or at its close, one of the hearers cried out, 'This is a messenger of God, and his doctrine is the doctrine of heaven. I once felt the pardoning love of God, and, blessed be His Name! He has recalled the wandering sheep.' The speaker was William Price, familiarly called 'Uncle Will'; his history deserves special notice. When a young man he enlisted in the Enniskillen Dragoons, went with his regiment to Flanders, and fought at the battles of Dettingen and Fontenoy. He was brought to experience the power of religion through the zealous exertions of John Haime. On one occasion when the regiment was drawn up and the cannon began to play upon them, the words of the Psalmist were suggested to the mind of Price: 'A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee'; and filled his soul with love and peace. He escaped unhurt, and in 1748, at the end of the war, returned to Fermanagh, where he endeavoured to lead his friends to a saving knowledge of the truth; but his words appeared to them as idle tales. Discouraged by lack of success, and being without one pious acquaintance, his love grew cold; but the forceful preaching of John Smith revived the faith and fervour of former days. The old soldier prevailed on Thomas Price—who appears to have been his son,—

with whom he lived, to invite the preacher to his house, and used his best exertions to collect his friends and neighbours to hear him. Only a few attended at first, amongst whom were two sons of a cousin of William Price, named Nehemiah and John Price, who thus received their earliest religious impressions. The former describes John Smith as ‘a plain, blunt man, of undaunted courage, fervent zeal and great diligence. He always had a word for saints as well as sinners. He had a powerful gift of prayer, and God crowned his labours with signal success.’*

John Smith continued to visit Tonyman as he had opportunity, preaching to increasing congregations. His fearless and fervent proclamation of the truth, accompanied by the power of the Holy Ghost, reached the hearts of the people, many of whom were greatly convulsed and prostrated in body, as well as deeply agitated in mind: some fell suddenly to the ground, as if struck by lightning, praying and groaning for mercy. Frequently the devoted Evangelist had to cease preaching, unable to proceed on account of the cries for salvation, and then he had recourse to prayer, pleading mightily on behalf of the penitents, until prayer was turned into praise. It was not unusual for twenty or thirty to be converted during one service. As the result of these labours a Society was formed, which became a centre of gracious influence to the surrounding country.

* *Primitive Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine*, 1827, p. 56.

The leader of this first class was old William Price, and among its first members were at least four young men, who afterwards proved useful Methodist preachers—Nehemiah and John Price, Robert Armstrong and John Mayly.

Among those brought to the knowledge of God about this time in the adjacent country was Mr. Hugh Drennan, of Skea—a man of strong understanding and sound judgment, and well-known to the venerable father of Methodism, with whom he corresponded, and by whom he was highly esteemed. Hugh Drennan discharged the duties of leader and circuit-steward faithfully, wielding considerable influence in the neighbourhood, in the promotion of the kingdom of Christ, and in the maintenance of Christian unity in the church for more than fifty years.*

Some young men from Tonyman visited the neighbourhood of Florence Court, and were instrumental in preparing the way for the preacher. Amongst the first here brought to the saving knowledge of the truth was Miss Shanklin, who became a most devoted Christian. She lived with a sister who was married to Mr. Little, a respectable farmer; and being a woman of good sense, exercised a considerable influence in the family circle. The preacher was invited to their house, where he and his successors ever after had a hospitable welcome; the family received much spiritual good;

* *Irish Evangelist*, 1860, pp. 105-6.

and their sober industrious habits secured the esteem of their neighbours.*

But of those who in this neighbourhood were brought under the influence of Methodism at this early period the most noteworthy was Daniel Bradshaw, Esq. He was a lineal descendant of the pious Bedell, Bishop of Kilmore, and in 1765, when about twenty years of age, purchased, and made his residence at Violet Hill, where he was on friendly terms with the noble family of Cole. Here he became acquainted with the Methodists; and through the Divine blessing on their efforts became anxious about his soul. Lord Mountflorece, afterwards Earl of Enniskillen, observing the change in his spirit, determined to draw him away from association with those who had caused this, as he thought, unnecessary seriousness; and with this object invited him to an entertainment at his house, to which Mr. Bradshaw went very reluctantly. But as soon as the frivolous amusements of the evening began, he slipped away, went to the usual preaching service, and before it concluded was enabled to believe with the heart unto righteousness. He immediately joined the Society, was soon appointed a Class Leader, and opened his house for the preaching of the Gospel. In time that neighbourhood presented a changed appearance, new Classes were formed, and the once Sabbath-breaking country became a land of prayer and praise. Lord Mountflorece and his

* *Irish Evangelist*, 1861, p. 138.

family, seeing the great moral transformation in the people, became favourable to Methodism, and his descendants have continued so to the present day. Mr. Bradshaw also during a long life gave clear and strong evidence of his deep love for God and sincere attachment to the Society.*

The parish of Clones, the greater part of which is in Fermanagh, at the time when John Smith began his labours, was in a most destitute state as to religious instruction; being ten miles in length, and from six to seven in breadth, with only one church, not sufficiently large to afford accommodation even for the people of the town. Only one service was held during the week, on Sunday at noon, and very few of the rural population attended. Those who resided at the distance of four or five miles, never saw the Minister at their houses, and very seldom had any intercourse with him, unless at marriages or christenings. In some families a chapter or two of the Divine Word was read on the Sabbath, but by far the greater number seldom enjoyed even this advantage. In the midst of this moral and spiritual wilderness John Smith opened his commission in the house of Mr. George Nicholl, a respectable farmer, who lived at Knappagh. A large congregation assembled, and listened with respectful attention. Other meetings were held in the course of time, and the Word reached the hearts

* *Primitive Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine*, 1852, pp. 317-19; and *Irish Evangelist*, 1861, p. 138.

of several who were led to join the Society. Among these were John Armstrong, of Lisrace, and John and James Clarke, of Cortrasna. John Armstrong's two sons, Robert and William, were converted to God subsequently. In a few years afterwards they removed to Kilmore, in the county of Cavan, where Robert was a schoolmaster and clerk of the parish church. He was a useful Class Leader, and was much respected as a steady Christian. In 1795 or 1796, both brothers removed to Drogheda, where Robert was, for many years, a successful and influential Leader.

John and James Clarke had both large families. James invited the preachers to his house, where, during his life, they found a comfortable home, and ever since they have been received by his descendants, and John's also, as ministers of the Lord Jesus Christ. Both families became strongly attached to the doctrines and discipline of Methodism. Great care was taken to impress the minds of their children with similar sentiments, and not in vain, several of the descendants of these good men, of the fourth generation, being now in close communion with the Methodist Church in Great Britain, Ireland, and in America. The Rev. William Ferguson was grandson of John Clarke, and the first Methodist meeting at which he was present was held in the house of his grandfather, to which he was carried in the arms of his mother. From the time of his earliest recollections they had the preacher once a fortnight, and prayer-

meetings twice on Sunday, and twice in the course of the week. These meetings were regularly attended by all the children and grandchildren of both families who were able to do so, and they were often favoured with gracious visitations from on high.*

The town and neighbourhood of Newtown-Butler were visited shortly after the introduction of Methodism into the eastern part of the county. In several places round the preacher was cordially welcomed. One of the first who were brought to a saving knowledge of God was Andrew Thompson, of Cornabráss, a respectable farmer, and brother of the Rev. William Thompson, the first President of the Conference after the death of Mr. Wesley. As a Class Leader he was most faithful and efficient. His religion burned as a pure flame of love; and he was 'instant in season, out of season' to speak a word for God. For years the spiritual state of his children gave him great concern, particularly that of his eldest son, who continued to walk in the ways of sin; the holy life and pious instructions of his parents apparently producing no impression on his obdurate heart. His father, however, continued to pray for him; and, after sixteen years' pleading with God on his behalf, his prayers were answered. In 1785, this young man went to Belturbet to sell wheat. Meeting with some little delay, after delivering the grain, before he received payment, he

* *Irish Evangelist*, 1861, p. 147.

took a walk by the river's side, when he saw a young woman washing clothes, and accosted her in a light and trifling manner. She replied with the utmost seriousness, and her words reached his heart, so that he returned home an altered man. After some months of deep concern, he obtained peace through believing, and continued, during a long life, to walk in the way of holiness. His brother and two sisters also found the Lord, and the stream of gracious influence has continued through the following generations to the present day.*

Another family that during this year and in this neighbourhood cordially welcomed the Evangelist, was that of Mr. George Armstrong of Ratoul, who for nearly fifty years laboured in the Lord's vineyard with acceptance and success, and whose descendants have been heartily identified with Methodism.

* *Irish Evangelist*, 1861, p. 147.



CHAPTER IV.

THE COUNTY OF CAVAN: 1766-67.

ON the 17th of July, 1756, Mr. Wesley, who was accompanied by Mr. Walsh, preached at Ballybeg, near Drumcree, in Westmeath, 'Where,' he says, 'we found a little company of earnest people, most of them rejoicing in the love of God.

To these were added a few from the county of Cavan. Joseph Charles going thither some time since on temporal business, occasionally spoke of the things of God. Many believed his report, and some found his words "the power of God unto salvation." (*Journal*.) Such is the brief and simple account of the introduction of Methodism into Kilmore, in the parish of Killinkere.

Amongst those who, at this early period, became more or less connected with Methodism here, were Messrs. Henry and Robert Brooke, who, up to 1758, resided in the neighbourhood at Rantavan.

The former was the author of *The Fool of Quality*,* *Gustavus Vasa*, and numerous other popular works. Although his theology was not thoroughly Wesleyan, he heartily sympathized with Methodism, to which he was much indebted. The following incident illustrates his readiness and power. One Sunday, the congregation assembled in the parish church, awaited a long time the arrival of the clergyman. At last they requested Mr. Brooke to conduct the service, which he consented to do. Having read the prayers, he opened the Bible, and preached extempore on the first text that arrested his attention. In the middle of his discourse the Rector arrived, and found the whole congregation melted into tears. Mr. Robert Brooke became a member of the Methodist Society, and in this respect his three children followed his example: Henry, the eldest son, being for about forty years one of the leading Methodists in Dublin. Robert, the second son, a colonel in the army, founded the town of Prosperous, County Kildare, in 1775, to which Mr. Wesley and his preachers were invited, and every facility was afforded them for preaching the Gospel. Thomas Digby, the youngest son, was also connected with the Dublin Society.†

* Abridged by Mr. Wesley, and published by him under the title, *Henry, Earl of Moreland*; and re-edited by the Rev. R. S. Brooke, D.D., with an introduction written by the Rev. Charles Kingsley.

† *Recollections of the Irish Church.* By the Rev. R. S.

At Kilmore also, about 1761-3, Robert Strawbridge, the pioneer of Methodism in Maryland, frequently preached, and for many years after the people were accustomed to speak of him as a man of devoted purity and considerable preaching ability.*

Reference has been made to the introduction of Methodism into Cootehill, in Cavan, in 1758; there is no satisfactory reason for believing that previous to the time when John Smith began his labours as a Methodist Preacher, the Society had obtained a permanent footing in any other part of the county. In 1766, however, in connection with the zealous and faithful labours of John Smith, a large number of Societies were formed, including those at Mullalougher, Killashandra, Bawnboy, Belturbet, Cavanagh, Ballyconnell, Swanlinbar, Furnaceland and Gortnaleg. Early in the year, as John Smith travelled between Clones and Ballybay, seeing a man lying on the road-side asleep, he awoke him, and found that he had been drunk and had lain there all night, having spent all his money and parted with most of his clothes. John Smith brought before him earnestly the wickedness and danger of his course, and then prayed with him. As he pleaded with God the poor inebriate wept in

Brooke, D.D. Second Series; and *Life of Henry Brooke*. By Dr. D'Olier.

* *History of the Methodist Episcopal Church, America*. By Abel Stevens, LL.D. Vol. i., p. 17.

penitence of spirit. That man was John Bredin, a Roman Catholic schoolmaster, who lived at Tullyvin, about three miles from Cootehill. He accompanied John Smith round the Circuit, and soon obtained a sense of sins forgiven.*

The young convert felt an earnest desire to lead others to a saving knowledge of Christ; and with this end visited Mrs. Maguire, of Mullalougher, whom he had previously known. He spoke to her of what the Lord had done for him, and his words sank deep into her heart. On leaving, he promised to return on the following Sabbath, and pray with any persons that would be present; but before Sunday came the people of the neighbourhood tauntingly spoke of him as a Methodist, and Mr. Maguire refused to let him pray in the house. A poor neighbour, however, gave a hearty invitation to God's servant, and Mrs. Maguire went to hear him. Mr. Maguire following to bring her back, arrived during prayer. He went in, and wishing to escape observation, knelt down, and was deeply convinced of sin. When the young convert concluded his address to the Throne of Grace, Mr. Maguire went forward to him, in great distress, requested an interest in his prayers, and invited him to his house on the next Sabbath. Mr. Bredin went, and having sung and prayed, left a copy of

* Unpublished MS. by J. G. H., in the possession of the Rev. W. G. Campbell, A.M.

the Rules of the Society.* During the following week John Smith preached twice on each of two days, at Mr. Maguire's to crowded congregations, and such was the influence which accompanied his preaching that thirty-three persons gave their names as willing to become members of the Methodist Society; among whom was Mrs. Maguire's 'poor, aged, blind mother,' who some time after was enabled to say: 'I am seventy-seven years old, and was only born this day.'

The struggling cause at Mullalougher met with much persecution; frequently the house was surrounded during the service by wicked men, who caused much disturbance. On one occasion an unusually large number of these assembled, some of whom fired guns near the house, and others threw stones at the windows. At length the ringleader of the mob opened the door, and his attention was immediately arrested by the words: 'Hark! how they clamour for His blood!' which the congregation were singing. He stopped, and the enquiry at once arose in his mind: 'Am I clamouring for His blood?' Those behind him urged him to go in; but he, with the cowardice of a guilty conscience, turning round ran off, pursued by his com-

* Mr. Bredin was called into the Methodist ministry in 1769: and, having travelled in various Circuits in Great Britain and Ireland, settled in Belfast, where he died in 1819. His talents and usefulness were considerable; through his instrumentality Dr. Adam Clarke became a preacher.

panions, who threatened to treat him worse than they intended to treat the preacher. The Methodists were frequently beaten, and in other ways ill-treated; but, owing to the interference of the civil authorities, they at length obtained protection. During this period a farmer, named John Scott, also opened his house at Mullalougher for preaching. Subsequently Mr. Wesley frequently visited this neighbourhood, and on one occasion the Society assembled at a place through which they knew he was to pass, on his way to Clones, 'Where,' says the good man, 'I had to alight from my carriage, and unite with them in supplicating at the Throne of Grace.' *

In 1777, Mr. Maguire, with his family, removed to Dublin, where two of his sons, Thomas and William, were converted, and were for many years active and efficient office-bearers of the Society. The latter, Mr. W. Maguire, was father of the popular evangelical clergyman the Rev. Robert Maguire, D.D., of London.

Once, as John Smith was about to ride through Swanlinbar, he observed a bridle-path, near the bridge, at the entrance to the village, leading to a hamlet at the foot of a hill, and determined, in the strength of the Lord, to turn aside and warn the people there of impending and everlasting misery. As he proceeded to carry out his inten-

* *Methodist Magazine*, Dublin, 1813, p. 36-7; and *Primitive Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine*, 1845, pp. 26-37.

tion, he heard, he narrates, a sudden noise like that of a violent whirlwind, and then a terrible voice shouting in his ears: 'Go back, go back, thou old knave! thou shalt do no good where thou intendest; I will be there before thee.' He firmly answered what he believed to be the devil: 'Thou liest, Satan, thou enemy of Christ and His servants. In His might I will go, and fear neither thee, nor all thy host.' Animated thus by strong faith, and without any uneasy apprehension, he went on, alighted at the door of one of the houses, soon collected the people around him, sang a hymn, prayed, and preached; and although at first some mocked, and all were astonished, soon the power of the Holy Ghost descended on the hearers, prompting the earnest cry for mercy, and enabling many to lay hold, in childlike confidence, on a present Saviour. A large class was formed, called the Furnaceland Society, amongst whom the work of God prospered.

On another day, as John Smith rode between Bawnboy and Swanlinbar, he saw two or three hundred persons on the side of a hill some distance from the road, dancing, shouting, and in other ways amusing themselves. He stopped, earnestly prayed to God to give His blessing to His word, and rode into the midst of the crowd; upon which the fiddler ceased to play, and the people stared in wonder at the stranger, while he cried with stentorian and solemn voice: 'O earth,

earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord!’ All were hushed into almost breathless silence, and he sang the hymn : ‘Behold the Saviour of mankind,’ etc.

The simple and pathetic story of redeeming love, accompanied by the power of the Spirit, reached the hearts of the hearers, many of whom wept before the servant of God had ceased to sing. He then dismounted, knelt, and poured out his soul to God in earnest prayer ; and he had not pleaded many minutes when his strong voice was lost in the loud and bitter cries of those around him. Yet he continued on his knees more than an hour, agonizing in prayer on behalf of those just awakened to spiritual anxiety, till the Lord filled the hearts of more than twenty of them with ‘joy and peace in believing.’

In this place a Society was formed of about forty persons.

A blessed revival took place, which extended over a large portion of the north-west of the county of Cavan, was accompanied by numerous cases of physical prostration, and led to the conversion of hundreds.

During this time of heavenly visitation, the work encountered cruel opposition, and that, in some instances, from quarters whence it was least to be expected.

The first to open his house to receive the servant of God, in the neighbourhood of Killashandra, was

Mr. Thomas Hewitt,* a member of the Presbyterian Church, who lived at Castlepoles. Soon after, a large Roman Catholic mob collected to attack his residence during service, and to beat the members of the congregation; but, being opposed by respectable members of their own Church, they were diverted from their purpose.

On one occasion, when John Smith was riding within two or three miles of Killashandra, he was met by the Rev. G. C——, who, in a most insulting manner, said to him: ‘How dare you go about preaching, frightening the whole country out of their senses, and thinning my congregation?’ To which the Evangelist replied that instead of turning the brains of the people, he only endeavoured to turn their hearts to the Lord, thus teaching them true wisdom. Mr. C——, in a rage, called the servant of Christ a scoundrel and a canting rascal, and horsewhipped him unmercifully. John Smith, like his blessed Master, ‘when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to Him that judgeth righteously.’ Mr. C—— rode away foaming with rage. Before eight days had expired, his house at Killygowan took fire during the night, and it was

* His son and namesake, converted some years subsequently, sustained the office of Leader for more than fifty-five years; and his grandson is the Rev. Robert Hewitt, who for more than forty years has faithfully and successfully laboured in connection with the Irish Conference.

with the utmost difficulty that he and his household escaped, destitute of everything except the clothes they wore.

One evening as John Smith was conducting a service at Mr. G. P——'s house, near Swanlinbar, two young men, who should have been gentlemen, conspired to pull down the preacher, and cast lots as to which should take the initiative. The lot fell on the more audacious of the two ; but the moment he entered the room all his strength and resolution forsook him, and he fell on the floor with such violence that blood gushed out of his mouth and nose. His companion pulled him out, and they staggered home, frightened almost out of their senses. In order to excuse their failure, they spread the silly story that whosoever the preacher looked at through his large eye-glass was at once struck into fits.

The greatest enemy to the work of God in that country was Mr. E. E——, of Ballymagauran, who held the Commission of the Peace. He used his utmost energy and influence to intimidate and crush the little Society. He formed a gang of the worst characters in the neighbourhood, of which he was the ringleader, who assaulted 'Swaddler John and his followers,' as the Methodists were termed, as they went to, were present at, or returned from their meetings, and even in their houses, or when at work in the fields : they did not hesitate to make false accusations against this persecuted people, and succeeded in getting some of them imprisoned.

More than once John Smith was thus unjustly deprived of liberty. On one occasion he was locked up in a house in Swanlinbar by Mr. E——, who, pistol in hand, threatened death to any one who should come near the prisoner. Yet these threats did not prevent the people from gathering at the window of the room, where the servant of God was confined, to converse with and cheer their friend.

As to Mr. E——, he passed through a series of terrible calamities. He was forsaken by his wife ; one of his sons, a promising young man, was torn to pieces by a wild beast ; his estate was frittered away ; and he himself, having lost his social position, and been superseded in the magistracy, wandered about as a vagabond, and died blaspheming God.

The spirit of persecution went further still ; it aimed at the life of the devoted Evangelist. Frequently young men, incited by others, conspired for the execution of a murderous purpose ; and, having drawn lots as to which should perpetrate the deed, waylaid their intended victim as he went to his appointments ; but he always escaped through the care of Providence. Occasionally he received notice, and thus avoided his persecutors, and at other times God Himself directly interposed on behalf of His servant.

As the first year of John Smith's public ministry drew to a close, in the midst of his labours, suc-

cesses and persecutions, he was greatly refreshed by a visit of the venerated father of Methodism. Mr. Wesley appears to have been profoundly impressed with the genuineness of the work and the Christian simplicity of the young converts, who were assembled from all the country round, including parts of the county of Fermanagh. The following is his account of this visit :—

‘April 29th, 1767.—A little beyond Swanlinbar I found a lively congregation of plain country-people, as simple and artless as if they had lived upon the Welsh mountains. So has God “chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise.”

‘April 30th.—Some of the chief persons in the town desiring I would give them a sermon there, I went thither in the morning. A large room was offered ; but it was quickly so full and so hot that I was obliged to go out into the street. I had hardly named my text, before a poor Papist, at a small distance from me, began blowing a horn. But a gentleman, stepping up, snatched his horn away, and without ceremony knocked him down. In the evening I preached in the country again, to a still larger congregation ; and God made His Word quick and powerful. Many were wounded, and many comforted.’ (*Journal*.)

On one of these occasions, at least, Nehemiah and John Price, of Tonyloman, were present at the invitation of John Smith. The elder brother thus describes his impressions : ‘ We found Mr. Wesley walking under some shady trees, in his gown and bands, and he appeared to me as a being of another world. In the course of the day he preached in a garden to a numerous and deeply attentive congre-

gation. I was much affected by the solemn truths which I heard upon that occasion ; I resolved to forsake everything that I knew to be wrong, and earnestly to seek those blessed privileges which the Gospel holds forth to the awakened sinner.*

John Smith persevered vigorously in his happy work, spreading far and wide the glad tidings of salvation.

* *Primitive Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine*, 1827 p. 57.



CHAPTER V.

THE COUNTIES OF MONAGHAN AND TYRONE, 1766-67.



ON April 29th, 1762, Mr. Wesley arrived at Monaghan, and was nearly arrested as a person of questionable designs. A short time previously the first rising of the Whiteboys * had taken place in the province of Munster, and alarmed the whole country; so Mr. Wesley and two of his itinerants had scarcely dismounted when some busy

* It was asserted that these men were urged on by French and Spanish emissaries; but it seems more probable that distress was the real cause of the disturbance. The woollen trade being abolished, owing to a vote of the Irish House of Commons, there was less employment for the people, and even this was further lessened by the diminution of tillage, as more land than usual was laid out for grazing. Landlords also, despite of solemn engagements to the contrary, enclosed commons which previously the tenants were allowed the use of. Provoked thus to resentment, and joined by many idlers naturally inclined to disturbance, these unhappy people assembled at night in large numbers, in order to obtain redress of grievances. They began with breaking down the fences

folk informed the Provost that three strange men had come to *The King's Arms*. The Provost and his officers proceeded without delay to secure their town from danger. Mr. Wesley was prevented from leaving the house, was closely questioned as to his doings and intentions, and would have suffered at least serious inconvenience from the meddling officials, but for two letters he had recently received, one from the Bishop of Derry, and the other from the Earl of Moira. Upon reading these the Provost apologized for the trouble he had given, and wished the good man a prosperous journey. (*Journal.*)

The first place in the county of Monaghan into which Methodism was introduced was Kilmore, near Rockcorry, and the agent was John Smith. It was the second place that he visited on entering the Itinerancy. His labours were abundantly owned of God in the salvation of souls. Among others was a teacher of dancing, who, in the presence of those who received his instructions, ridiculed the idea of such an ignorant man as John Smith at-

of commons, and therefore were at first called *Levellers*; but afterwards got the name of Whiteboys, because they wore white linen frocks and white cockades. When their associations were regularly formed they bound themselves to each other by oath, seized horses and arms, and proceeded to a systematic execution of their designs. They houghed cattle, and committed acts of cruelty on tithe-proctors and others who were the objects of their abhorrence. These lawless societies continued in active operation for several years.

tempting to preach; yet went the same evening to hear for himself. This resulted in his conversion to God.

At one of the meetings here a woman was so deeply agitated in mind, and so convulsed in body during the powerful prayer of the Evangelist, that the people in the neighbourhood seriously consulted by what means they should put him to death. One man, W. M'D——, was so determined on destroying 'that conjurer,' as he called the preacher, that he sharpened a long clasp-knife, and, having concealed himself among some bushes close to the path on which he knew the zealous itinerant would pass on his way to Kilmore, confidently waited his opportunity. John Smith was most punctual in attending to his appointments. The would-be assassin heard his footsteps, and on peering through the branches to take a good aim he was suddenly seized with terror, the knife fell from his hand, and with trembling he came out of his hiding-place, confessed his diabolic purpose, and earnestly besought forgiveness. The faithful preacher, losing sight of his own narrow escape in the thought of the fearful danger of the sinner, replied: 'Poor man! let us go behind the hedge, and try if God will have mercy on you.' They did so, and the Lord heard prayer, and transformed the murderer in intention into an humble Christian. Meanwhile, the work at Kilmore prospered, until about seventy persons were received into the Society.

Soon after John Smith had preached his first sermon in the parish of Clones, the good seed was carried eastward to the town, the servant of God laboured there with success, and a society was formed, Richard Kelso and John Kerr, respectable tradesmen, and a young man named Hugh Fauls, being among its first members. Richard Kelso entertained Mr. Wesley at his house in 1775.* Hugh Fauls had also the privilege of entertaining Mr. Wesley. So highly did he prize the communion of saints that for upwards of seventy years, except when ill or from home, he was never absent from his class. Once when at a distance on business, he rose early on the Sabbath morning, went out, and seeing a woman neatly dressed, and walking quickly, concluded she was a Methodist; he followed her, entered the house into which she went, and then found, as he had anticipated, a people met to worship God, in joining with whom in Christian fellowship his spiritual strength was renewed. For many years he went every Sabbath morning to Monaghan, a distance of ten miles, to meet his class. The estimate in which he was held by the founder of Methodism may be judged from the fact, that although Mr. Fauls never attempted to preach, he was permitted to attend the sittings of one of the Conferences.†

* *Irish Evangelist*, 1861, p. 193.

† *Primitive Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine*, 1838, pp. 05-11.

Another converted at this early period was a lad of fourteen, named William Boyle, who, two years afterwards, was appointed a leader, and four years subsequently a local preacher, and who introduced Methodism into many districts in the surrounding country. When the unfortunate division of 1816 took place, he identified himself with the Primitive Wesleyan-Methodists, and though in his sixty-third year, entered the itinerancy in connection with that Society. During his religious career, which embraced a period of seventy-six years, he maintained an unblemished character, and died in peace in June, 1843, aged eighty-nine years.* At the introduction of Methodism into Clones, an innkeeper accommodated the congregations with a barn; but a cottage was afterwards taken in Whitehall Street, to which they removed.

The spiritual prosperity with which Clones was favoured at this early period extended to Stonebridge, and several other places in the neighbourhood. At Killycronaghan, a family named Lemon, having received the truth, opened their house for preaching; and in Newbliss, a woman named Cork and several of her daughters were converted. The village of Drum also partook of the showers of blessing that were at this time refreshing the adjacent country.†

* Minutes of the Primitive Wesleyan-Methodist Conference, 1843.

† *Irish Evangelist*, 1861, p. 193.

The earliest event recorded in connection with the history of Methodism in Tyrone is a visit paid by Mr. Wesley to Omagh in May 1765. Societies were formed in the towns of Castle Caulfield and Dungannon, in the eastern part of the county, during the year 1766-7, by Messrs. James Rea and Robert Williams, the preachers stationed in what was then called the "North-east Round." Mr. Wesley, in April, 1767, refers to the Society at Castle Caulfield as "the firstfruits of the county," and to the members there as being full of spiritual life. He also mentions the large congregations at Dungannon.

Another place in Tyrone into which Methodism was introduced at this period, was the townland of Lislip, near Newtownstewart, which previously was in a state of great spiritual destitution. At the solicitation of a poor but pious neighbour, Mr. John Gray invited to his house John Smith, to whom both he and his family became greatly attached, as, through his instrumentality, salvation came to their house. First the father, then each member of his family, as well as some of the servants, and many of the neighbours, were made partakers of the grace of God. This was the beginning of a new and happy era throughout that district. The wilderness and the solitary place became glad, and the desert began to rejoice and blossom as the rose.

A class was formed, of which Mr. Gray was

appointed the leader, and the little Christian band had great prosperity.*

During the course of this year, Mrs. Moore, whose husband was in the army, heard John Smith preach at Belturbet, and realized the gospel as preached by him to be the power of God unto her salvation. She, with her husband, afterwards removed to the neighbourhood of Augher, where, being desirous of the enjoyment of the ministrations which had been so blessed to her, she invited the devoted evangelist to preach in the town. In February, 1767, John Smith responded to her invitation, which proved instrumental in introducing Methodism into that part of Tyrone. Amongst those present on this occasion was a Mr. James Smith, who then heard the word of life preached for the first time, and was convinced of his sinful condition, and the necessity of giving his heart to the Lord. Under these impressions he immediately invited the preacher to his house at Roughan, and from that time until his death in 1811, he was a liberal and hearty supporter of Methodism. About two months subsequent to John Smith's first sermon at Roughan, a class was formed by Mr. Thomas Brisco,† of which James Smith was appointed the leader. This office he filled with

* *Primitive Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine*, 1859, pp. 24-5.

† Mr. Wesley having seen the extensive and laborious field in which the evangelist was working, sent Mr. Brisco from *Athlone* to assist him during the remainder of the year.

acceptance for many years, being a man of deep piety, much power in prayer, and of that strong faith which looks for and obtains direct fruit. At this early period he had to endure many trials and much persecution, on account of his religious profession; but by Divine grace proved to be an example of meekness and uprightness, of zeal and perseverance. The quarterly meetings in that part of the circuit in which he lived were held in his house until a chapel was built. He died rejoicing in a bright and glorious prospect of his heavenly inheritance.*

Such was the generally favourable impression made by the labours of John Smith at Augher, that when Mr. Wesley visited the town in April (1767), and preached in the castle-yard—the use of which was doubtless obtained by Mr. Moore—the congregations were both “large and deeply serious.” About this period John Smith seems to have been instrumental in forming a society in the neighbourhood of Augnacloy, where Mr. Wesley also preached in May, 1767.

On the 2nd of April, 1767, Mr. Wesley wrote from Sligo to Mrs. Crosby, of London, a letter in which he states his impressions with regard to the work and the preachers in the province he had just left. The following is his language: ‘There is an amazing increase of the work of God within these few months in the North of Ireland. And no

* *Methodist Magazine*, Dublin, 1812, pp. 40-1.

wonder ; for the five preachers, who have laboured there, are all men devoted to God—men of a single eye, whose whole heart is in the work,

“ And constantly trample On pleasure and pain.” *

The part performed by John Smith, one of the five, during this the first year of his itinerancy, was certainly of no ordinary character, either in its nature or its results. To realize this, it should be remembered that the field was in many respects most unpromising; it was very extensive, about sixty miles square, and the people amongst whom he laboured were in general poor, illiterate and ignorant of the first principles of the Gospel. None can tell what he must have suffered from exposure and want in the early part of the year, when preaching-places were few. Often, like his Redeemer, he had not where to lay his head. And when doors of usefulness opened in all directions, still greater suffering awaited him from privations and persecution ; † not to refer to the tremendous strain on his physical strength arising from fre-

* *Wesley's Works*, Fifth Edition, 8vo., vol. xii., p. 355. The date printed is, ‘Sligo, May 2nd, 1766’; but this is evidently an error, for Mr. Wesley was not in Ireland in 1766, and there were only two preachers stationed then in the North of Ireland. But Mr. Wesley was in Sligo on May 2nd, 1767, and at this time there were five preachers in Ulster.

Some idea of the nature of these is given by John Dillon, who succeeded John Smith on this Circuit. See *Arminian Magazine*, 1783, p. 616.

quent and protracted services, at which he often continued speaking and singing for eight hours almost without intermission. At times for an entire week he scarcely rested day or night; in sunshine and shower, travelling over marshes and bogs, rocks and mountains, praying, preaching, and singing. But God had blessed him with a stalwart frame, a powerful voice, and a brave spirit, ever ready to 'endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.' During the greater part of the year,* he was left without a fellow-labourer, there being only four other Methodist preachers stationed in the province of Ulster; two in the north-west, with Londonderry as their centre; and two in the north-east, with Newry as their head-quarters, while he was alone in the south. It should also be borne in mind that this brave worker was without educational advantages; but this lack was more than compensated by the Holy Spirit, Who spoke through him to the hearts of his hearers.

No connected history of the glorious work which took place was written by the only person who was familiar with all its details, and no one else ever attempted it. Incidental allusions are all that are available now, but even from these it is evident that, notwithstanding the almost insuperable diffi-

* Mr. Wesley in the course of the spring sent two additional preachers to Ulster, one to the north-east, and the other to assist John Smith.

culties John Smith had to contend with, the success which crowned his labours has been rarely surpassed. There could not have been fewer than five hundred souls converted to God by his ministry during the year. Many of these, probably, did not identify themselves with Methodism. Possibly in part from his lack of education, but chiefly from the want of persons of experience qualified to watch over and instruct the young converts, the work of organization was left very much to the Preachers who immediately succeeded him. But if some of those brought to the Saviour were lost to Methodism, they were a blessing to the respective Churches with which they were connected. Arrangements were made, however, in thirty-six places for the young converts and the anxious inquirers to meet together for fellowship and prayer; and thus Societies were formed, which subsequently were duly constituted.

Sudden and widespread as was this wonderful outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the work was genuine, deep and permanent. So marked was the change in the character and conduct of the people, that some of the most determined opponents of the work were constrained to acknowledge the hand of God. A few of the converts, it is true, proved unfaithful, but the larger proportion—some for a long period—‘witnessed a good confession’ in life, and triumphed over the last enemy. Even if the names of all these were forthcoming, the record would give an exceed-

ingly inadequate idea of the results of this gracious work.

The seed of Divine truth, as sown by John Smith, possessed a marvellous power of reproduction. All those who received it in 'honest and good hearts' have long since passed to their eternal reward, but the fruit still exists in their children and spiritual offspring to the third and fourth generation. Upwards of twenty of those converted through the instrumentality of John Smith became Methodist preachers.* The connection between the seed sown more than a century ago and the fruit now manifest may, in some instances, be distinctly traced, and though, in most cases, it is hidden, it is there; and thus the good done still lives, and will live in blessing to generations yet unborn.

What a striking instance is here of the vast amount of moral and spiritual good which may be effected by the humblest Christian, notwithstanding the most formidable obstacles! He needs but to be 'filled with the Spirit' in order to accomplish a great and glorious work. Now, there are many thousands of Christians possessing much greater wealth, culture, and influence, and not having to contend with the same prejudice and persecution, yet their success in winning souls falls far short of that realized by men of far humbler attainments. How is this? The obstacles are such as riches, mental talent, or social position cannot possibly re-

* *Myles' Chronological History*, p. 135.

move. It is not by these that the Lord's work is done, but by the living energy of the Holy Ghost. Let not, then, Christian workers be too solicitous about the mere external equipments, however important they may be, or endeavour by elaborate organization to compensate for the lack of spiritual power; but rather, by patient waiting on God in earnest, believing prayer, seek the all-important qualification for Christian usefulness. And then, clad in the panoply Divine, with hearts glowing with love to Christ, and lips touched with hallowed fire, they shall speak, so that others shall not be 'able to resist,' and the feeblest 'shall be as David; and the house of David as God, as the angel of the Lord.'



CHAPTER VI.

THE ARMAGH CIRCUIT: 1767-68.

AT the close of the Methodistic year 1766-67, John Smith rode to Dublin, to attend, for the first time, the sittings of the Methodist Conference. A short time previously, Mr. Wesley wrote the following letter to the printer of the *Free-man's Journal*, which, as it affords an example of the opposition the early preachers had to contend with in the metropolis, and as it has not been published since it appeared in print at the time, is now inserted :—

‘SIR,—Two or three days ago, I was desired to read a letter printed in the *Dublin Mercury* of June 27th. I cannot possibly believe what I have heard strongly asserted, that the author is a clergyman of our own church ; the slander is so dull, so trite, so barefaced, and clothed in so base, ungentleel, Billingsgate language. “Cursed gospel gossip,” “sanctified devils,” “scoundrels, canting, hypocritical villains”—these

are some of the flowers which he strews abroad with no sparing hand. The writer, therefore, must needs be one of the lowest class, as void of learning and good manners as even of conscience.

‘His wonderful tale confutes itself. “At the last lovefeast, at midnight, she fell into a trance.” *Expade Herculem*. Let every man judge of the rest by this: none of our lovefeasts last till midnight, no, nor till ten, rarely till nine, o’clock. But the poor man confounds a lovefeast with a watch-night (at which the service does usually continue till midnight or a little longer), knowing just as much of one as the other.

‘I call on him, if he does “carry on a considerable trade in the city,” or any trade at all (except, perhaps, that of retailing whiskey, or crying bloody murder through the streets), to give up his name and place of abode, with the name of the curate whom he brought to reason with his wife. No evasion here can be received. Unless this be done without delay, all candid men will believe the whole story to be a senseless and harmless slander.

‘If Mr. B—— (with whom I had formerly the pleasure of conversing at his own house, and who behaved like a gentleman and a Christian) had objections to me or my fellow-labourers, he would not have proposed them in such a manner. He would have spoken (in private or in public) as a gentleman to a gentleman, and I would have answered him plainly and directly. Indeed, I am

ready to give any man of understanding a reason of the hope that is in me, that I have a conscience void of offence towards God and towards men.

‘ I am,

‘ Your humble servant,

‘ JOHN WESLEY.*

‘ *Whitefriars Street,*

‘ *July 9th, 1767.*’

In the metropolis, John Smith met with Mrs. Dorothea King, and probably was the guest of her father, Mr. John Garret, of whom Mr. Wesley says he was ‘one of the most lovely old men I ever saw.’ Mrs. King was a lady of most attractive appearance, cultivated intellect, and Christian spirit. Notwithstanding the lack of education and the uncultivated manner of the evangelist, he and Mrs. King, being one in thorough consecration to the cause of the Redeemer, were led to entertain for each other the highest esteem and warmest Christian affection.

One of the only two letters written by John Smith now accessible, was addressed to this excellent lady.

The Conference met on the 22nd and 23rd of July. John Smith here met several of that band of devoted itinerants whom he had only known previously by reputation, as well as others with whom he had formerly been acquainted. Although he had not been called into the work until after the

* *Dublin, Freeman's Journal*, July 11th, 1767.

English Conference of 1766, he was received as having travelled one year. For the first time a return of the members in Society was made for publication, the total in Ireland being two thousand eight hundred and one. As details are not given, no idea can be formed as to how many of these were from the new Circuit represented by John Smith; but it is clear that the numerous fields of usefulness he had opened and prepared, as well as the success of the preachers on 'the North-East Round,' involved the employment of additional labourers. Instead of four preachers being appointed to Ulster, as at the previous English Conference, seven were now sent. - The two 'Rounds' were retained, but their limits were enlarged and their names changed. The entire province was thus divided into two vast Circuits, which might have been appropriately designated the north-west and the south-east; John Smith being appointed to the latter. The day after Conference was observed as a day of fasting and prayer, and concluded with a public service in Whitefriars Street Chapel, which continued until after midnight. It was conducted by Mr. Wesley, who refers to it as the most solemn Watchnight he remembered in Ireland.

Refreshed and encouraged by his sojourn in Dublin, John Smith soon entered into his new sphere of congenial and hallowed work. The head of the Circuit was Armagh, where a Society had been formed about three months previously, under

noteworthy circumstances. Mr. Wesley had preached at Clonmain on the 14th of April, and there were present Mr. and Mrs. Russell, of the neighbouring city. The latter had obtained the sense of pardon while attending meetings held by Methodist preachers at Athlone; and hearing of Mr. Wesley's intention to preach within a few miles of her residence, was most anxious to see and hear him; but her husband was unwilling that she should be identified with a system which he considered disreputable. At length, by the advice of a friend, he consented, and resolved to accompany her that he might judge for himself. What he heard so completely removed his prejudices that, at the close of the service, he invited Mr. Wesley to stop at his house. The invitation was at once accepted, and an appointment made for preaching in the market-house of the archiepiscopal city on the following day. The father of Methodism, however, was not permitted by the sovereign of Armagh to use the public building. This prohibition led to a request from Mr. M'Gough, one of the chief merchants of this city, to preach in his avenue. Immediately after the service, a Class was formed, of which Mrs. Russell was a member.*

The first preaching-place in the city was rented by Mrs. Russell, Mrs. Isabella Maxwell, and Mrs. Jane Justice. It was an humble edifice, situated in Thomas Street, almost opposite the opening into

* *Irish Evangelist*, 1861, p. 121.

Dobbin Street; and consisted of a single room, fourteen feet long, and twelve wide, unceiled, with low walls, thatched roof, two small windows, and a little pulpit in one of the corners, raised but a single step above the level of the floor, which was all the elevation that the roof could afford. Yet, in fulfilment of His promise, God visited this lowly tabernacle, and refreshed His servants with tokens of His love.*

The circuit was a most extensive one; passing from the city in a north-easterly direction, the appointments included Richhill, first visited by the itinerants in 1762, from which time there was regular preaching once a fortnight; Tanderagee, where Mr. Wesley preached in the previous April to 'the largest congregation he had seen in Ulster'; Terryhoogan, 'the mother church in all these parts,' where was built for the accommodation of the preachers a prophet's chamber, nine feet long, seven broad, and six high, the walls, ceiling, and floor being of mud, and the furniture consisting of a clean chaff bed; Kilmoriarty, into which Methodism was introduced from Grange by a person named Finn, where a mud-wall preaching house was erected in 1767, and where Mr. Wesley was entertained by Mr. George Joyce; Lurgan, where there had been preaching for upwards of ten years, but it is doubtful if any Society had been formed; Lisburn, one of the first places in Ulster in which

* *Ibid.*

Methodism had obtained a footing, the Society of which, in 1766, consisted only of fourteen old women, one of whom, Mrs. Cumberland, and her son-in-law, William Black, received the preachers, the services being held in their houses; Comber, which had been visited by the evangelists for about nine years, but the cause in which was feeble; Newtownards, where a fluctuating Society had been formed in 1756, despite persecution which sowed the seed of that disease which shortened the life of the sainted Thomas Walsh; Belfast, where a Society, consisting of a handful of people, had been organized in 1763, and where, in the absence of a chapel, an old slaughter-house was used for the services; Carrickfergus, in which a frail Society had existed for about eleven years, although the congregations were good which gathered to hear Mr. Wesley; and Larne, where, both seven and nine years previously, the father of Methodism had preached with encouragement and success.

Again starting from Armagh, and travelling in a north-western direction, some of the preaching appointments were—Grange, where a class had been formed three years, which seems to have consisted of persons of better circumstances than the majority of those who at that period usually joined the Society; Clonmain, probably the first place in the provinces into which Methodism was introduced, where had been erected what was then the largest *chapel in the north of Ireland*, and where there

were one- or two-and-twenty Societies within a compass of ten miles ; Cockhill, where a Society had existed at least two years ; and Dungannon and Castle Caulfield, to which reference has already been made. There were also at least two appointments in the south-east of the city, Rathfryland, where seven years previously Protestants and Roman Catholics flocked to hear the venerable Wesley ; and Newry, one of the earliest, and at one period one of the largest, Societies in Ulster, but at this time rent and reduced by offences.

For one quarter the collective salaries of three preachers who were on the Round during part of the year 1766-67, were only nine pounds ; and at the Quarterly Meeting for March, 1767, it was resolved 'that from henceforth, every member in each Society shall pay one penny every quarter, to go towards defraying the extraordinary expenses of the Round.'*

The preachers appointed to this Circuit were Thomas Ryan, John Smith, John Morgan, and Thomas Halliday. Thomas Ryan had formerly practised as an attorney, and afterwards resided on his estate at Clonmain. About the year 1750, when on a visit to England on business, he was converted to God during a service conducted by a Methodist preacher ; on his return home he began at once to labour for the salvation of souls, and in 1767 was received as a Methodist preacher. He seems to

* *History of Methodism in Armagh.* By J. M. L., p. 7.

have possessed considerable natural talent and great zeal, combined with a degree of culture rare amongst his contemporaries. John Morgan was an Englishman, who began to travel in 1761, and came to Ireland in 1765.

John Smith was not the man to keep within a certain pre-arranged circle of appointments without making any aggressive effort to reach the masses. His desire was 'to preach the Gospel in the regions beyond'; and opportunities for doing so were not lacking.

About this time, Methodism was introduced into Derryanvil, a place described by Mr. Wesley as 'a little village out of all road, surrounded with bogs, just like my old parish of Wroote, in Lincolnshire.' The wife of Mr. Robert Johnston, residing here, while on a visit to some relatives in the county of Meath, who had become Methodists, was strongly impressed with the change that she witnessed, and became concerned for her own salvation and that of her family and friends. She invited a Mr. Doolittle, a Local Preacher, to visit her, and he came no less than seventy miles to declare in that neighbourhood 'the unsearchable riches of Christ.' His sojourn at Derryanvil was brief, but was much owned of God; and to this day 'Mother Ailse' (Alice) is spoken of with respect and gratitude, as having been the first to bring a Methodist preacher to the neighbourhood.*

* *Memorial of T. A. Skillington*, p. 10.

Mr. James Matchett, of Derryanvil, at this period heard the gospel preached by one of the itinerants, and it proved the power of God unto his salvation. When a class was formed, he was appointed the leader. Through his instrumentality his friend Thomas Jones was induced to attend the services ; his mind became impressed with the truth, and he was led to decide for God. He opened his house for the preachers, and for upwards of thirty years he walked in the unclouded light of his heavenly Father's countenance. He was a man of strict integrity, and of a warm and genial spirit.*

A Local Preacher named John M'Neese, a man of humble gifts but great usefulness, (who in 1769 entered the itinerancy,) when visiting a person in affliction at Killyman, announced his intention to preach to as many as would come and hear him, and a large congregation attended. Amongst those present was a young man named Robert Miller, who was thus brought to feel his need of salvation. Soon after, this young man's uncle, Mr. Boartree, invited John Smith to his house to preach, when he gave to the inquirer such counsel and encouragement as he needed, commending him to the Divine blessing in earnest prayer ; and being satisfied that a work of grace was begun in his soul, received him as a member of the Society. At length Robert obtained the assurance of the Divine favour ; and, returning home with a heart overflowing with love

* *Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine*, 1827, p. 800.

to Christ, proved the means of leading one of his cousins to the Saviour, who became a consistent and attached member of the Society. Robert, two years after, was appointed the leader of a class at Derryhirk, where he was made instrumental in the conversion of many souls.*

At this time a Mr. and Mrs. Horner occupied a farm on the borders of Strangford Lough. They were Presbyterians, and instructed their children in moral and religious principles. One of their sons, William, went to hear John Smith preach, and through his powerful ministry was brought under deep conviction of sin. He became a Methodist; and, seeking the Lord in His appointed way, was not suffered to wait long until he obtained a sense of sins forgiven. His parents strongly disapproved of his connection with this new sect, and gave him one night to consider whether he would renounce his new associates or be expelled from home; but he, with a clear, strong conviction of duty, promptly replied, 'Though my father and mother forsake me, the Lord will take me up.' The threat, however, was not executed, and he had ultimately the satisfaction of knowing that both his parents were converted to God. Several of the family also became the subjects of converting grace, and joined the Society. William at once engaged in work for his Redeemer, outside the domestic circle as well as within it, and with such acceptance and success

* *Primitive Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine*, 1837, pp. 275-80.

that in September, 1769, he was summoned by Mr. Wesley to supply the place of one of the preachers who had retired from the work in the Enniskillen Circuit. After having travelled eight years in his native country, he was removed to England, where he continued to itinerate until 1819, when through age and infirmity he was compelled to retire from the active work. He fell asleep in Jesus in 1826, in the eightieth year of his age.*

At Markethill, John Smith found an opening for the Gospel, and was instrumental in leading several to the Saviour, and thus of forming a Society. Here he was followed by his colleague, Thomas Halliday, who was arrested by order of Mr. Carleton, a magistrate of great influence in that part of the country. When Mr. Halliday was brought before him, he found the Justice of the Peace, accompanied by a gentleman, who at once proceeded to examine him, and who, in the course of conversation, made such objections to Scriptural truth that Mr. Halliday, looking him full in the face, said: 'I wish, Sir, I knew who your Minister is; if I did I would go directly and tell him what an infidel he has in the parish, and show him that it is his duty solemnly to warn you of your awful state.' He, being himself the Rector of the parish, became confused. Mr. Carleton burst into laughter, and the preacher was dismissed.†

* *Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine*, 1836, pp. 1-4.

† *Irish Evangelist*, 1860, p. 106.

A fair idea of the nature of the reception which John Smith met with in this Circuit, and the success which attended his labours, may be drawn from the following letter to Mrs. King, most likely written by an amanuensis at his dictation :—

‘ November 4th, 1767.*

‘ MY DEAR SISTER,—

‘ When I went to the North, and found many people whose profession and practice did not agree, it made me cry out against all who sinned against light, and denounce the judgments of the law against them. At my first going round, the people seemed to be weary of me ; but at my second coming they had time to consider ; and God gave them to see the fault was in themselves, not in me. Then there was a great revival, and some were convinced and converted to God. Some backsliders also were restored. On taking a view of the Societies among whom I labour, I find there have been above thirty new members added since I left you. O, pray that the Lord may give me humility ! That and Christ are all I want. Christ, I know, is present, but humility is often far from me. Satan is ready to make me believe the Lord loves me above others ; but I know it is a temptation.

‘ We held our quarterly meeting at Tanderagee,

* Either through a mistake of the writer or the printer this letter, addressed to Mrs. King, Dublin, is printed as if written *in the metropolis*.

where we were greatly favoured. There came many strangers from Markethill. After supper I spoke strongly of their having disobeyed God all their life long, which brought tears from their eyes. On seeing their distress I went to prayer with them. One of them instantly cried out: "I have found the Lord!" . . . We continued in prayer all the night, and by morning four of them were converted; two young women, also, who were in another room, were convinced and converted in a short time. Many other instances I could give you of the power of God.

'I am, yours, etc.,

'J. SMITH.'*

The only other letter sent by this devoted evangelist that is within reach is the following, addressed to Mr. Wesley; it is interesting as being characteristic of the writer:—

'NEWRY, *January 3rd*, 1768.

'REV. SIR,—

'I received a letter some days ago from Mrs. King, giving an account of the prosperity of the Gospel in Dublin, which gave me secret joy; and some account from you, which made my heart rejoice. The account you demand of me I can give you with singleness of heart. I can say with joy, that from the day I left you to this day, I have not had a cloudy hour; the Lord knowing what an

* *Arminian Magazine*, 1782, pp. 688, 689.

ignorant creature I am, as an indulgent Father, supports me: my soul enjoys peace in Christ.

‘With regard to this Circuit, we have had an increase of grace and love. Since I came to it the work of God is carrying on. I bless God, and thank you for my fellow-labourer in Christ, Thomas Halliday; for no man is of use to this Round but such as fears neither men nor devils, and has no thought about what he shall eat or what he shall drink, and is willing both to spend and be spent for the glory of God, and the increase of the Church of Christ. My son * I keep at school yet. As for Newry I always find power to preach amongst them. We had one young woman joined this day six weeks; and I have hopes of the prosperity of the Gospel in Newry and through all the Societies. My heart’s desire is for your welfare and prosperity in the Church. I cannot number the new members, but I have seen forty-two who have received the forgiveness of sins, which keeps my heart still in joy.

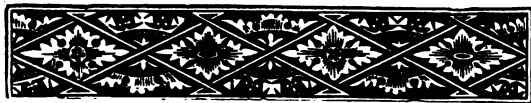
‘I am, Rev. Sir,

‘Your affectionate son in the Gospel,

‘JOHN SMITH.’ †

* David, who was at Kingswood School.

† *Arminian Magazine*, 1783, pp. 48, 49.



CHAPTER VII.

THE AUGHER CIRCUIT: 1768-69.

THERE was no meeting of the Irish Conference in 1768; but at the English Conference assembled at Bristol, John Smith, having been on trial for two years, was ‘received into Full Connexion,’ and appointed, with Thomas Halliday and James Rea, to labour during the following year on the Augher Round,* the north-west half of the province of Ulster. His time, however, seems to have been chiefly, if not exclusively, given to the counties of Tyrone, Fermanagh, and Cavan, the scenes of many of his former triumphs. During the year of his absence from this district of country his successors had formed the Societies into Classes, and arranged a regular plan of preaching appointments, and had visited several new places, extending as well as

* In the List of Stations in the “Minutes of the Conference” he is called *Joseph* Smith by mistake.

consolidating the good work. Societies were formed by Mr. John Dillon at Aughrim and Old Cleens, in Magheraboy. Mr. John Maguire received the preachers at the former, and two or three old widows entertained them at the latter place.*

The good seed was carried at this period through various parts of the country to Randalshough, where Richard Fallis was led to embrace salvation by faith. He opened his house for preaching, and evinced through life the spirit of Him Who is 'meek and lowly in heart.' In Inisway and Cosbystown Societies were formed, after they had been visited several times by the preachers. One of the firstfruits of the ministry here was Prudence Deane, a young woman who, by her good sense and stability of character, though in humble circumstances, exercised a considerable influence for good in the neighbourhood. Her piety commanded the respect of even the most thoughtless. At an advanced age she died happy in God.†

The part of Fermanagh extending from Ballinamallard to near Pettigo, and embracing Irvinestown, Lisnarick and Kesh, was at this time inhabited chiefly by Protestant farmers in easy circumstances, but in general ignorant and careless as to spiritual things. Although the classes for religious instruction, and the faithful preaching of the Rev. Philip

* *Irish Evangelist*, 1860, p. 106.

† *Ibid*, 1861, p. 138.

Skelton* (who was Rector of Pettigo from 1750 to 1759) had, it is true, alarmed the fears and raised the moral tone of many, who were thus led to think seriously, yet that able and laborious divine, not having clear views of the method of a sinner's justification, few, if any, received the forgiveness of sins. They sought to be justified by the works of the law, and not by the faith of Jesus Christ. A brighter day, however, was about to dawn on the Church in that neighbourhood.

In 1768, Mr. Hugh Sanderson, a young preacher, who seems to have been sent to the Circuit from England, preached near the farmhouse of a Mr. Myles, in the townland of Salry, about five miles north of Enniskillen, and many flocked to hear him. At the close of the service he said that if any of the hearers would give him lodging, he would remain and preach again. Mr. William Armstrong, of Sidaire, was present with several of his family; his daughter Mary was deeply impressed with what she had heard, and, yielding to her persuasions, her father invited Mr. Sanderson to his house, where, to the present day, the preachers have found a most hospitable welcome and a comfortable home. Soon after this, Thomas Halliday and John Smith visited the neighbourhood. Their ministry was made a blessing to great numbers, notwithstanding severe persecution. Mr. Arm-

* A man of real intellectual power, whose works, once much esteemed, are now too little read.

strong's son John and two daughters soon experienced the saving power of Divine grace. Mary, who was blind, continued to live with her brother, a holy, happy follower of the Lord, till she exchanged mortality for life.

The preachers also extended the field of their labours in this neighbourhood, so that Societies were formed at Knockmanoul, Irvinestown, and other places, and many were converted to God. In holding these meetings they were well sustained by some of the young converts. Thus Nehemiah Price of Tonyloman, William Little of Lissan, near Tempo, and others, were in the habit of visiting and preaching at these places. At Knockmanoul the servants of God were received by William Graham, and the class there, strangely enough, was long called Molly Gregg's, that being the maiden name of his wife.* Amongst those then brought to the saving knowledge of the truth were Mrs. Noble, of Kilgortnaleague, and seven of her daughters.

The earnest efforts of the members to extend the Redeemer's kingdom soon led to an interruption of their peace. A young man in the neighbourhood became the ringleader of the persecutors of the Methodists, and cruelly maltreated all who came within his reach, not sparing even his aged mother, whom he dragged out of one of the meetings,

* *Primitive Wesleyan Magazine*, 1827, p. 57, and unpublished MS. by J. G. H., in possession of the Rev. W. G. Campbell, A.M.

beating all who dared to interfere with his brutality. Once, during the service at Knockmanoul, he collected a mob of about one hundred persons, called loudly for his mother and sisters, and began to belabour those about the door, breaking the jaw-bone of George Magee.* Some members of the Magee family, who were present, with two or three others, seeing what was done, at once sallied out unarmed, deprived a number of the rioters of their weapons, and so utterly routed and terrified their assailants that the very presence of a Magee became a guarantee for the quiet of a congregation.†

One Sunday afternoon the wild youth mentioned above broke into Mr. Armstrong's house at Sidaire, where a prayer-meeting was being held, struck several with a loaded whip, and severely beat Nancy Armstrong, whom he accused of making his sister a Methodist, and whom he left on the floor apparently dead. From the effects of this cruel treatment she never completely recovered.

On another occasion this infamous young man, with some of his companions, violently seized John Smith, had him carried to an unfathomable spring called the Lough of the Bog, and intended to drown

* Said to have been a cousin of Dr. William Magee, Archbishop of Dublin from 1822 to 1831, who was a native of Feramanagh.

† Unpublished MS. in the possession of the Rev. W. G. Campbell, A.M.

him there; but they discovered that the preacher had been a Freemason, and they also being connected with the craft, they not only gave up their diabolic purpose, but also permitted John Smith to travel through the country unmolested during the remainder of the year.*

It, however, soon became manifest that the cruel persecutor, with all his loud talk and dauntlessness in beating those who made no resistance, was at heart a coward. William Little, of Lissan, a local preacher, went to conduct a service at Sidaire. He was a young man of great physical strength, who believed that his powerful arm was given to be used against the enemies of the Gospel, and concerning whose feats numerous traditions are to be found. During the sermon the bold youth entered with his head covered. The preacher quietly requested him to take off his hat, which he insolently refused to do. Then, knowing the character of the man, William Little went forward, horsewhip in hand, took off the hat himself, reminded the persecutor of his former base and cruel acts, told him that he had not come there to be murdered, and threatened to give him a good thrashing if he did not promise to change his course. The cowardly rascal not only gave the required pledge, but also undertook to use his influence to put a stop to the persecution which had existed in the neighbourhood.†

* Unpublished MS. in possession of the Rev. W. G. Campbell, A.M.

† *Ibid.*

But meantime opposition had arisen from another quarter. Several of the younger members of the Henderson family, at Drumbulcan, having become Methodists, were very harshly treated by their parents. They were locked up in their rooms, received but little food, and were severely beaten; yet they persisted in attending the services. Miss Henderson was obliged to leave home for a time, and retire to the house of Mr. Little, near Florence Court. Her father brought a clergyman to reason with her, who failed to move the young convert. Then a mob was collected on a Saturday evening during the service at Mr. Armstrong's, at Sidaire, with the intention of seizing and driving out of the neighbourhood the two preachers who were there. The family and congregation, having received notice of the approach of their assailants, strongly barricaded the doors and windows. The Hendersons and their followers surrounded the house, erected a number of tents, and for two or three successive days and nights continued the blockade, being determined to starve the besieged into compliance with their terms. At length a gentleman in the neighbourhood interfered, and having obtained an interview with the preachers at the parlour window, and ascertained that they were licensed, he represented to those outside that they were acting contrary to the law, and rendering themselves liable to severe punishment. He then proposed to raise the *siege on condition that the preachers would forgive*

the past, if they were not interrupted in future. The conditions being mutually agreed to, this conflict ended.*

Most of the young women who suffered so severely during these persecutions were subsequently married to respectable members of the Methodist Society in different parts of the country, and their children occupied honourable and useful positions in the Church.†

During the course of the year, one of the preachers on this Circuit, most likely John Smith, on his way from Tonyman to Londonderry, stopped at Magheralough, near Trillick, where he was entertained by Mr. G. Irvine; and also at another townland of the same name near Derg Bridge,‡ at both of which he ministered the word of life. The Lord gave His blessing with His word, especially at the latter place, and a gracious work then commenced, which resulted in the turn-

* *Irish Evangelist*, 1861, p. 154, and unpublished MS. in the hands of the Rev. W. G. Campbell, A.M.

† Thus Miss Henderson became the wife of James Copeland, of Lisbellaw: the Rev. W. Copeland, who entered the ministry in 1806, was their son. One of her sisters is stated to have married John Gola, most likely John Whitley, of Gola. A Miss Noble was married to John Armstrong, of Sidaire, and the Rev. Wm. Armstrong, who entered the ministry in 1805, was their son. Another Miss Noble became the wife of Mr. Keys, of Bush-hill, Moynaghan, near Irvinestown; and the Revs. Thomas and William Keys, who entered the ministry in 1799 and 1806, were their sons.

‡ Now called Castlederg.

ing of many from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, who both in the public ministry and in more limited spheres of usefulness, adorned the doctrine of God our Saviour. Amongst those converted was Mrs. Margaret Johnston, of Lisleen, who was for many years a 'mother in Israel.' The Methodist chapel now in use, in the erection of which she took a deep practical interest, occupies a site close to where her residence stood.*

On one occasion John Smith preached in the open air at Drumquin, and at the close of the service inquired if any person was willing to receive him and afford an opportunity of proclaiming the glad tidings of salvation. Amongst his hearers were a Mr. and Mrs. Smith, who invited him to their dwelling at Cavandarragh. The invitation was gladly accepted, and led to the conversion of both host and hostess, who became members of the Society. Mrs. Smith was a woman of deep piety, and for many years enjoyed the blessing of perfect love. Her two sons, Robert and James, entered the itinerancy and were useful preachers.†

On another occasion, as John Smith was riding near Drumquin, two respectable men on horseback overtook him, who, having saluted him, enquired where he came from, and whither he went; he

* An Elegy on the death of this excellent lady appears in the *Arminian Magazine*, 1785, p. 439.

† *Primitive Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine*, 1828, p. 322.

answered, 'I have come from the city of destruction, and am journeying to the celestial city.' But they did not understand him, so he proceeded without delay to bring before them man's guilt, and the atonement of Christ as the only and all-sufficient means of redemption. They heard with attention, and were so deeply impressed with the solemn truths brought before them, that they requested him to accompany them, and he remained with them two or three days, during which both found peace with God, and others in their houses and neighbourhood being sincerely impressed, a Society was formed. It is exceedingly probable that these two men were William Finlay and Samuel Steele, as they both were converted at this time, were warm friends, and both lived in the townland of Magheracoltan. William Finlay was a class leader for fifty years, and for upwards of twenty years efficiently filled the office of steward in the Londonderry Circuit. For half-a-century the Wesleyan ministers regularly preached in his house. He was an excellent and exemplary man; his children and his children's children have been partakers of 'like precious faith,' and have maintained their attachment to Methodism both at home and in the colonies. Mr. Samuel Steele, father of the Rev. S. Steele, one of the ablest preachers Irish Methodism ever produced, was also a most devoted and useful man, and for about sixty years held the office of a *class leader*.

The good work also extended to Fintona, where a number of persons were converted, and led to become members of the Society.

The openings for preaching on this Circuit were so numerous, and the success which attended the ministry of the word, so marked, that a young man named George Snowden, who at the following Conference was received on trial, was sent to assist in the good work. He preached at the Market-house of Clones in February. On this occasion a young man named James Boyle was present, and was deeply impressed with the truths to which he then listened for the first time. Soon after John Smith came to the town and preached, and the young man was again a hearer. At the close of the service the evangelist announced that he would hold a meeting at five o'clock on the following morning, remarking that he would then know who were on the Lord's side. James Boyle before retiring to rest prayed that if it were the Lord's will that he should become a Methodist, he might awake at the time appointed; he did so, went to the preaching, and was deeply convinced of sin, although two years elapsed before he was enabled to rejoice in the unclouded sense of the Divine favour.*

At the close of the Methodist year Mr. Wesley visited the Circuit, and having spent more than a week in Londonderry, arrived at Augher faint and weary, after a long ride on an extremely hot day.

* *Methodist Magazine*, Dublin, 1812, p. 130.

His physical exhaustion evidently prevented his enjoyment of the service there, so nothing is stated by him as to the spiritual condition of the Society. Having been refreshed, however, by a good night's sleep, he proceeded to Sidaire for the first time, and here he saw such manifest tokens of the work of the Holy Spirit, and realized so much of the presence and power of God, that he was constrained to continue in prayer for a longer time than he had done for years. On the following day at noon he preached in Enniskillen, where at that time there was no Society, but where he had 'a large number of hearers, some civil, some rude, and almost all totally unaffected.' He then rode to Tonymoman, where he found a congregation after his own heart: 'Great part of them knew in whom they had believed; all were deeply and steadily attentive; and many were thoroughly convinced of inbred sin, and groaning for full redemption.' On the day following he went to Swanlinbar, and found there 'as artless, earnest, and loving a people as even at Tonymoman,' and when he preached, 'the very Papists appeared as attentive as the Protestants.' Thus it is evident how manifestly the Divine blessing rested on the labours of John Smith in these parts of the Circuit during the year.



CHAPTER VIII.

THE LONDONDERRY CIRCUIT: 1769-70.

THE Conference of 1769 met in Dublin on the 19th and 20th of July, under the presidency of Mr. Wesley. Nearly all the preachers were present. The net increase in the number of members in Ireland during the year amounted to four hundred and eighty. That this addition took place chiefly in the Augher Round, it seems reasonable to conclude from the fact that the number of preachers in it was doubled, and no increase was made in the number of any other Circuit. The Circuit was divided into three parts, of which Enniskillen, Augher, and Londonderry were the centres; to the last-named John Smith was appointed again with Thomas Halliday. This Conference is memorable for the decided measures adopted by Mr. Wesley in thoroughly organizing the itinerant system, to which, under God, Metho-

dism is indebted for much of its success.* The day following the meeting of the preachers was set apart, as before, for fasting and prayer.†

Into Londonderry, Methodism was introduced about the year 1753, by Thomas Williams, one of Mr. Wesley's itinerants; but unsteadiness on his part was the means of blasting the very hopeful prospect presented; so that for several years the preachers were withdrawn. A few, however, of the once promising Society continued to meet together, and thus the spirit of piety was graciously sustained amongst them. In October 1764, they sent a letter to Mr. John Johnson,‡ of Dublin, earnestly requesting that a preacher should be sent to them. Being unable to go himself at the time, he sent James Clough, who was not a little astounded on arriving at the city, and seeing the humble circumstances of those by whom he had been invited. While this worthy brother was labouring in the midst of great discouragements in his new Circuit, a remarkable circumstance took place in Dublin, which had an important bearing on the work at Londonderry. A trooper named Edward Weir, who, in a moment of excitement under the influence of strong drink, had mortally wounded a person that insulted him, was condemned to death, and

* *Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine*, 1836, p. 3.

† *Wesley's Journal*.

‡ He was then the superintendent of the work in the north of Ireland, in the absence of Mr. Wealey.

when in jail under his sentence, was converted to God through the Divine blessing on the visits of the above-mentioned Mr. Johnson. The glorious testimony to the power of Divine grace which this condemned culprit bore at his execution, which was referred to in the public papers,* produced a most profound impression, and led to a large increase in the membership of the Society and congregation in the metropolis.† An account of the conversion and dying testimony of this ‘brand plucked from the burning’ was published in the form of a tract, some copies of which reached Londonderry, and one of them was placed in the hands of a lady, who in her youth had heard Thomas Williams preach. Her husband, Mr. Alexander Knox, a descendant of the celebrated Scotch reformer, was a gentleman of great ability and high moral character, and also one of the leading members of the Corporation. Mrs. Knox read the tract with intense interest, and, her husband entering the room as it was finished, she said: ‘Here, Mr. Knox, here is the religion that will make you and me happy! Read it, and praise God who has shown us the way of peace.’ He read it, believed, and ‘gave glory to God.’ Soon after they both joined the Society, from which they never separated.‡

In 1765, Mr. Johnson arrived at Londonderry—

* Vide *Freeman's Journal*, Dublin, November 12th, 1764.
Methodist Magazine, Dublin, 1806, p. 197.

† *Life of the Rev. H. Moore*, pp. 50-52.

to take the place of Mr. Clough—three days before Mr. Wesley reached the city for the first time.* The father of Methodism was entertained by Mr. Knox, in whose house he found ‘a convenient lodging.’ On the following Sunday, his host took him to the Cathedral, and led him to the Corporation-pew, where he was placed next the Mayor, Mr. William Kennedy.† This resulted in an invitation from the latter to dinner, which Mr. Wesley accepted.

In 1767, Mr. Wesley writes: ‘I found we were still honourable men here, some of eminence in the city being both hearers and doers of the Word.’ The room rented for preaching soon became too small for the congregations, and in 1768 a large chapel was built in Magazine Street. This is still standing, being used as a store.‡

At the time John Smith was sent to the city, the cause was low. Three months previously, Mr. Wesley, although admitting that the congregations were brilliant, says, that while in no other place in Ireland had more labour been expended by the ablest of the preachers, yet the Society was small, and in general cold and heartless.

At this period a bright, intelligent, but delicate

* *Methodist Magazine*, Dublin, 1806, p. 197.

† His second daughter, then a young lady of nineteen, was afterwards married to Alexander Crookshank, grandfather of the present writer.

‡ For some mistake, the date on this building is 1763, of 1768.



youth attended, with his parents, the preaching services in Derry. He was the son and namesake of Mr. Alexander Knox, and subsequently became the friend and correspondent of Bishop Jebb. Although he did not, except for a brief time, consider himself a Methodist, yet he received his earliest religious impressions through the agency of Methodism, his religious views were moulded by her theological teaching, and he ever cherished for her ministers, and especially for Mr. Wesley, the most profound respect. At the close of the century, when a spirit of insurrection prevailed in this country, he, as private secretary to Lord Castle-reagh, then Chief Secretary of Ireland, did good service for the preachers in assisting to secure for them freedom and protection in their itinerant labours.

John Smith and Thomas Halliday very soon extended their labours beyond the few appointments they had received from their predecessor. They travelled through the whole of the counties of Londonderry, Donegal, and Antrim, calling sinners to repentance, and pointing them to the Saviour; and thus many were converted, and numerous Societies were formed. The scene of the greatest success of John Smith during the year was the south of the county of Antrim. He was mightily owned of God in Ballinderry, Magheragall, and Aghagallon.*

* *Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine*, 1853, p. 507.

Although there are few details of the glorious revival which then took place, yet such was the impression made by the powerful preaching of this apostle of Christ, that over sixty years subsequently the people of the neighbourhood were wont to recite numerous remarkable incidents in connection with this gracious work.* It seems to have commenced with a young man named John Martin, a linen weaver, who was so respected by the family in whose house he boarded that a room was placed at his disposal, where he met with some others for exhortation and prayer, and the attendance at these meetings continued to increase. John Smith soon found his way there, and by means of his devoted labours the work deepened and spread in a most remarkable manner. Numbers were convinced of sin, some constrained to rise in the night and go out to the fields, despite the inclemency of the weather, and there they continued for hours together in earnest prayer, until they found redemption in the blood of Jesus Christ. There was much need of Christian workers to lead in prayer, and to give comfort and encouragement to inquirers and young converts. Valuable help was given by a poor, blind, but most devoted woman, named Margaret Davidson, and the Lord soon raised up two young men as leaders, who were specially adapted to this work. Even some of the public-houses were

* 'Lanktrees' Narrative,' p. 353, and *Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine*, 1853, p. 507.

changed from dens of iniquity into houses of prayer. Not long after the revival commenced, two of the converts died very happy in Christ. Whilst strength lasted, they continued to entreat sinners to come to the Saviour, and exhorted those who were in Christ to 'abide in Him.' These triumphant death-scenes proved of much blessing to the infant Society at Ballinderry.*

There are records of the religious experience of some of those who were converted during this blessed work. One was Mr. Thomas Kinley, who was attracted by the preaching of John Smith. The Word was attended with Divine power, he was brought under deep conviction of sin, and continued for some time in great anguish of mind, until, seeing the simplicity of the plan of salvation, he laid hold on Christ. Encouraged by what the Lord had done for him, he thirsted for higher spiritual blessings, and was enabled, by Divine grace, to realise the all-cleansing efficacy of the Saviour's blood. For about nineteen years, his life afforded a striking and beautiful evidence of uninterrupted 'fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.' On his death-bed he seemed to exult as on Pisgah's top, and view the celestial land with unclouded vision.†

Amongst others who were converted during this

* *Extraordinary Life of Margaret Davidson*, by Rev. E. Smyth, pp. 112-13.

† *Arminian Magazine*, 1791, pp. 465-7.

period were the members of a Roman Catholic family named Crosson, who resided at Derryaghy. They were warmly attached to the institutions and dogmas of their Church, and strict in their attention to its requirements ; but, prompted by curiosity, they went to hear the strange preacher, whose labours had occasioned so much sensation in the neighbourhood. Under the preaching of the truth, the eldest daughter was deeply convinced of her sinful and perilous state, and resolved to seek the Lord at any cost. She at once joined the Society, although opposed and persecuted by her friends, and especially by her father. But he was prevailed upon to go again to the services, and the Lord met him in mercy. He sought the pardon of sins through faith in Christ, and did not seek in vain. For twenty-three years he lived a witness of the power of Christ to save to the uttermost ; and in death gloriously triumphed through the blood of the Lamb.*

When Mr. Wesley visited Ballinderry in 1771, he says that a great multitude received the Word with readiness of mind ; the people were earnest and simple-hearted, and the Society consisted of about fifty members. In the house where he dined, the father and mother, with one son and five daughters, were all walking in the light of God's countenance. During his visit, a touching incident occurred. As he prayed with an old woman, a

* *Arminian Magazine*, 1796, pp. 462-5.

little girl, her grandchild, said, with tears, 'Oh, grandmother, have you no sins to cry for, as well as me?' (*Journal.*)

About the year 1769, John Smith's ministry was greatly blessed to a young gentleman named Andrew Delap, whose father, an officer in the Navy, had been killed in an engagement. His uncle, Mr. Samuel Delap, Treasurer of the County of Donegal, a gentleman of fortune, took care of the orphan boy, giving him a liberal education. He became a very fine young man, with an attractive address, and a fund of native humour, which made him the life of the social circle. But he had such an impediment in his speech that, when excited, he was convulsed before being able to express his thoughts. This unfitted him for any of the learned professions; but, having a carefully cultivated taste for music, he became an excellent performer, especially on the organ. Being wishful to enter the army, a promise was obtained that he would be sent out as a cadet with a corps which was about to embark for foreign service.

One Sunday, he went with some companions to the Methodist preaching-place for diversion. He seated himself opposite the pulpit, and assuming the attitude of devout attention, kept his companions in a state of subdued merriment. John Smith bore their improper behaviour without seeming to notice it, until the close of the service, when, coming down from the pulpit, he went to Mr.

Delap, and, putting his hand on his shoulder, said : ' Young man ! strange as it may now appear to you, you will shortly preach that Gospel, which this evening you have been ridiculing.' No doubt Andrew Delap was not a little surprised at this prediction, but he joined with his companions in pronouncing it a good joke. Yet the impression remained with him, and from that time Divine light began to shine into his mind ; but having no connection with any one who could help him out of the ' slough of Despond,' he was nearly driven to despair. Passing through a neighbouring town one day in this unhappy state, he saw a number of people going into the yard of an inn, and found that a Quakeress was preaching there. She described his state accurately, and gave him much encouragement. He was then led to attend regularly John Smith's ministry, which he found very profitable. Meanwhile, he was disappointed in his expectation of entering the army, and was soon engaged in a far nobler warfare. When he became a member of the Methodist Society, his uncle was so annoyed that he declared that he must either give up Methodism or leave his house. The young man was too deeply impressed with eternal things to be moved by the loss of temporal advantages, and he ' chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.' He became so attached to Mr. Smith that he accompanied him *round the Circuit*, notwithstanding the privations

this involved, and soon after obtained a sense of the pardoning love of God. Once, having gone some miles into the country together, they retired to rest. Mr. Delap was much fatigued, but Mr. Smith's mind was so exercised in regard to the work of God, that he continued for some time to agonize in prayer. At length Mr. Delap, becoming impatient, requested his friend to compose himself to sleep. Mr. Smith replied: 'Ah! you peevish boy, go to sleep then;' which Mr. Delap soon did. Awakened after a considerable time, he found that Mr. Smith, to avoid disturbing him, had retired to the farthest part of the room, and, kneeling on the earthen floor, had continued pleading with God.

Having found peace and joy in believing, Mr. Delap soon felt an ardent desire to lead others to a saving knowledge of the truth. But the impediment in his speech seemed to be an insuperable barrier; for, even when he endeavoured to narrate his experience at the class-meetings, it was with great difficulty that he could articulate so as to be understood, and it was painful to witness his efforts. He earnestly besought the Lord:

'Unloose my stammering tongue, to tell
Thy love immense, unsearchable.'

The prayer of faith was so fully answered, that he was enabled with great fluency and power to invite others to the Saviour. In 1774, he entered the ministry, and travelled in some of the most important circuits with great acceptance and success.

On one occasion he went to St. Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin, and at the beginning of the service was so fascinated with the music, that he requested permission to assist the organist, who with some misgivings gave his consent; but he soon found that there was no danger of his reputation being injured by the performance. At the close of the service, the Dean inquired who had played the organ; and, being informed that it was a Methodist preacher, said: 'Truly, if he can use his tongue as well as he does his fingers, he is an admirable fellow.'*

It is rather disappointing, at the end of such a year's work, to find that the number of members returned from the Londonderry Circuit was only sixty, but this admits of a satisfactory explanation. The additional members were evidently not returned until the following year, when there was reported an increase of three hundred and forty-five.

It is very satisfactory to observe that in the two Circuits originated by John Smith only three or four years before, there were in 1770, one thousand one hundred and nineteen members of the Society, most of whom were directly or indirectly the fruit of the labour of this devoted evangelist. In 1760, there were only about two hundred and fifty members of the Society in the whole of Ulster.

* *Irish Evangelist*, 1860, p. 98; and 1862, p. 236.



CHAPTER IX.

ARMAGH CIRCUIT: 1770-71.

‘He liveth long who liveth well,
All other life is short and vain ;
He liveth longest who can tell
Of living most for heavenly gain.’

THE Irish Conference had no meeting in 1770, but the British Conference re-appointed John Smith to the Armagh Circuit, to which had been united the eastern part of the county of Tyrone, and from which had been cut off most of that portion of it which was in the counties of Down and Antrim, thus forming a new Circuit, of which Tanderagee was the head. His superintendent was Francis Wrigley, a native of Manchester, who had commenced to travel twelve months previously, and was this year sent to Ireland. He was a man of commanding appearance, with but limited educational advantages, abrupt and imperious in manner, a strict disciplinarian, rather inclined to stand on his official dignity, of unbending integrity, yet

withal having a warm heart. He has the unenviable notoriety of being the preacher who injudiciously rebuked Adam Clarke for writing some Latin lines, and thereby put a stop to his classical studies for four years.

During the two years of John Smith's absence from this Circuit, a small Society, much alive to God, had been formed at Kennard or Caledon.* Mr. Samuel Bates, a native of Yorkshire, a man of eminent piety and usefulness, had settled at Charlemont, where he not only devoted his Sabbaths to the service of God, but generally spent his week evenings also in preaching the Word of Life in the adjacent country. Through his instrumentality many obtained the forgiveness of sins. He began at about this time to meet the children in Charlemont for religious instruction, and continued to do so for several years. This seems to have been on the Sabbath; and if so, it was the first Sunday-School in Ireland.†

When he had successfully worked for Christ in this way for many years, Mr. Wesley appointed Mr. Bates to a Circuit; but being considerably advanced in life, and a subject of affliction, he was compelled in a few years to become a supernumerary.

The congregations at Charlemont became so large, that the room used for these services did not afford

* *Wesley's Journal*, April 19th, 1769.

† *Methodist Magazine*, Dublin, 1805, p. 103.

sufficient accommodation ; but a malt-kiln was taken, and fitted up for the use of the Society and congregation. One of those who attended the services was Mrs. Dickson, who, on account of her age, was unable to walk to the parish church at Lough-gall, about four miles distant. Her son James, with whom she lived, was annoyed at her having any connection with the Methodists; but at length he went to hear for himself, although determined never to become identified with such a people. Having slipped into the malt-kiln, and secured a position unobserved, his mind was most favourably impressed with what he heard, which subsequently led to his conversion to God, and his official connection with Methodism, which continued for upwards of half a century.*

No doubt the good work was greatly retarded, both during this and the preceding year, by social disturbances which took place in this district of country, and were at their height at this period. A combination known as 'The Hearts of Steel,' was formed in the county of Antrim in 1769, the result of the landlords' oppression and injustice. Many of the poor people, pinched beyond measure by the cruel treatment they had received, rose *en masse*, and having pledged themselves to be 'true as steel' to each other, maimed the cattle of their oppressors, wrecked their houses, and committed

* *Primitive Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine*, 1827, p. 244-248.

sundry other acts of violence. The association soon extended into the neighbouring counties of Down, Armagh, Tyrone, and Londonderry, as the wrongs avenged were, unhappily, not confined to Antrim. Owing to the sympathy of the people with the disturbers of the peace, Government found it exceedingly difficult to deal with them, and so a considerable time elapsed before their depredations were suppressed.

One of the early itinerants, named James Kershaw, a man of considerable ability, laboured in this district, in 1753, with encouraging success. He formed a small Society at Bluestone, which ere long, probably through want of oversight, became extinct. He was married to the daughter of a farmer named Dynes, who resided there.

She died soon after, leaving an infant daughter ; and when Mr. Kershaw received an appointment in England, the child was left under the care of her grandmother. This girl, being about sixteen years old, at this period, inquired about the people with whom her father was connected, and heard of the Society at Kilmoriarty, four miles distant. She went to the place, accompanied by Margaret and Mary Malcomson, and their cousin Anne Malcomson, afterwards Mrs. Dodson of Tanderagee ; and before long she induced her grandmother to invite the preachers to her house. Thus, about the year 1770, Methodism was re-introduced to Bluestone, and a small Society formed, consisting of the above

young women and a few others. John Smith's labours in this neighbourhood are said to have been specially owned of God, and to have made a lasting impression.*

About this period a class was formed at Lurgan. Isaac Bullock was one of the first converted under the Methodist ministry. He had been in the army, was engaged in the capture of several islands in the West Indies; and was one of sixty, called the 'forlorn hope,' who first entered the breach at the storming of Havannah, in 1762, only six of the party escaping with their lives. A few poor people united in Christian fellowship, and met in the house of this brave soldier to hear the Word of Life, and to strengthen each other in the Lord.†

About this time, also, a good Society was formed at Ballymacawley, and the preachers were hospitably entertained by Mr. Waugh, father of the Rev. John Waugh, and grandfather of the Rev. James S. Waugh, of the Australasian Wesleyan Conference. Mr. Waugh had been for many years an Elder of the Presbyterian Church, and even after he became a Methodist, retained the office, that he might in some measure restrain the fierce Calvinism then so prevalent in Ulster.‡

A Society was formed at Blackwatertown, the class being, twelve months later, placed under the care of Mr. Bates, of Charlemont.

* *Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine*, 1827, p. 798.

† *Ibid.*, p. 800.

‡ *Irish Evangelist*, 1861, p. 53.

At Glenarm, also, John Smith found an opening to proclaim the glad tidings of salvation, and that in remarkable circumstances. It being deeply impressed on his mind that he should go and preach there, although he had never been in the town and knew no one in it, he at once followed what he believed to be the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Near Glenarm he overtook a young lady riding, with her servant, and on his entering into conversation with her, she told him that the town was a very wicked one. He inquired if there were any good men there, and she said: 'Yes, there is one, William Hunter.' The evangelist rode on, inquired for the house of the one pious townsman, and when he reached it, a respectable young woman came to the door. He asked her name, and being told 'Betty Hunter,' he alighted, and said: 'Betty, take in my saddle-bags, take my horse down to the inn, and tell every one you meet that a visitor at your house has good news to tell at seven o'clock.' She did so, not knowing why. At the appointed hour, the house was well filled: John Smith preached, and did so twice each day for nine days. So deep and general was the interest excited in the services, that even some members of Lord Antrim's family were present, and would allow none to molest the servant of God, saying they believed him to be 'an honest and good man.' When about to leave, he asked the landlady of the inn how much he was to *pay for his horse*. 'Nothing, sir,' she replied; 'a

gentleman has paid all, and will do so, if you stay a month.*

These services were greatly blessed to William and Betty Hunter. They brought up their children in loving attachment to Methodism. Two of their sons, John and James, were converted in youth, entered the medical profession, and eventually settled in London: the former in Bloomsbury, and the latter in Islington, both retaining their connection with the Society. James Hunter, aided by some others, succeeded in raising the first Methodist chapel in his neighbourhood. He was Society-steward at Islington for many years, and lost none of his interest in his native country, having always a hospitable welcome for the Irish preachers who visited the metropolis. He continued a Methodist for more than half a century; his remains lie in the graveyard of City-Road Chapel; and in the Liverpool-Road Chapel, Islington, a handsome marble tablet was erected to his memory.†

Mr. Wesley paid his usual biennial visit to Ireland at the close of this Methodistic year. He arrived at Cookstown on Tuesday, June 18th: the house at which he alighted was filled with whisky-

* Mr. Wesley, in narrating the above incident in his *Journal*, July 4th, 1771, writes: 'John Smith, now with God.' But this evidently must refer, not to the date given, but some years later, when he transcribed his shorthand notes for publication.

† *City-Road Chapel and its Associations*. By G. J. Stevenson. Pp. 465-66.

drinkers, and the whole town was all business and confusion, it being the fair-day. However, a tent made by the Society at Terryhoogan, two years previously, was set up; the people flocked from all quarters to attend the service; and, although many of them were far from sober, behaved tolerably well. On Wednesday, he preached at five a.m., and at noon, to a lifeless company; and then, accompanied by Francis Wrigley and John Smith, rode to Stewartstown, where he preached in the court-house to a large congregation, most of whom conducted themselves with decency, though very few of them appeared to understand anything about religion. On Thursday, they went to Castlecaulfield, where Mr. Wesley preached on the green before the castle to a large and serious congregation. On Friday, at eleven, there was a still larger congregation in the same place, whom Mr. Wesley exhorted to be 'not slothful in business,' but 'fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.' In the evening, he preached at Armagh, in Mr. M'Gough's avenue. The congregation was in an arbour, with the widespread branches of the trees quite overshadowing them. On Saturday, Mr. Wesley rode to Caledon, where, two years before, the Rev. C. W. Congreve, Archdeacon of Armagh,* had received him with the most cordial affection, and invited him to preach in his new church; but now, his love having grown cold, Mr.

* He received his appointment in 1738, having probably *been associated* with the Wesleys at Oxford.

Wesley was left to preach in the street to a quiet congregation. On Sunday evening, at Armagh, such a multitude of people assembled, and were so closely packed, that, though in the open air, the heat was almost unbearable.

On Monday, at noon, Mr. Wesley preached at Blackwatertown, accompanied by the Circuit preachers; and in the evening at Clonmain, where the congregation was very dull. On Tuesday he preached at Cock-hill, where he found many of the people were alive to God. On Wednesday he preached at Grange to a still larger and more earnest congregation; but he found the most encouraging Society of all at Derryanvil, several of the members of which continued to rejoice in the perfect love of God. On Friday he preached in the street at Portadown, to a serious, well-behaved congregation; and in the evening at Kil-moriarty, to the largest audience he had during the week.*

On Saturday, 29th June, the fellow-travellers probably parted company, Mr. Wesley to visit the Tanderagee Circuit, and Francis Wrigley and John Smith to resume their ordinary work, and prepare for the approaching Conference.

* *Wesley's Journal.*



CHAPTER X.

THE ENNISKILLEN CIRCUIT: 1771-72.

THE Irish Conference of 1771 assembled in Dublin on July 18th and 19th, and was 'a solemn and useful meeting.' The net increase in the number of members of the Society during the year was upwards of five hundred. John Smith was again appointed to the Enniskillen Circuit, with Robert Wilkinson, Richard Whatcoat, and James Perfect—all, it would seem, Englishmen. Robert Wilkinson, who began to travel in 1769, was a man of strong faith and great power in prayer, whose labours were abundantly owned of God. Richard Whatcoat, who also entered the ministry in 1769, was said to be 'dead to both envy and pride.' He was so familiar with the Word of God, that he was designated 'the Concordance.' In 1784, he was sent by Mr. Wesley to America, where, sixteen years subsequently, he was elected a Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal

Church. James Perfect, who had just been received into the Itinerancy, is said by Mr. Wesley to have had 'both an honest heart and a good understanding.' Yet, some years later, by imprudent zeal, he was the unintentional cause of a serious division in the Waterford Society, and a short time after left the Connexion.

Although the Enniskillen Circuit was not nearly so extensive as when John Smith was stationed there before, yet it was still very large, numerous new openings having been found.

Of these one at least is worthy of notice. William Horner, to whom reference has already been made, was appointed to the Circuit in the autumn of 1769, and in passing through Maguire's Bridge, delivered an earnest and affectionate address to an attentive audience in the open air, and then inquired if any one was willing to show hospitality to a stranger, who had come many miles to try to do them good. A Mr. Crawford came forward and invited him to his house, which thenceforward was a stopping-place of the Circuit preachers, although a Society was not formed in the town until some years after.*

On this Circuit the preachers had to bear many discomforts. 'The round' took them eight weeks; and during this time each slept in nearly fifty different places, some of them damp, and others not very clean. They generally preached two or

* *Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine*, 1836, pp. 1-4.

three times each day, besides meeting the Societies and visiting the sick ; and often their only fare was potatoes and a little salt meat.*

But they were encouraged in finding the Societies in a healthy state. Mr. Wesley had visited them a few weeks previous to the Conference, and rejoiced greatly at the evident tokens of spiritual prosperity. Thus at Swanlinbar, 'the people were full of faith and love, and panting after the whole image of God.' At Tonymonan, they were deeply athirst for the full salvation of God. At Lisbellaw, where the good man had no intention of preaching, he found a congregation waiting in the streets to hear him, and the sermon was listened to with the deepest attention. And at Sidaire, there were abundance of people panting for the water of life.

It was also most encouraging to those appointed to labour on the Enniskillen Round, to see tokens of continuous and increasing spiritual prosperity in every part of the Circuit during the year. How far this success was the result of the Divine blessing on the zealous labours of John Smith, cannot now be determined. He was so intimately associated with his colleagues, that little more can now be attempted than to refer to the results of their joint labours, by tracing the leading events which occurred on the Circuit at about this period.

Of those who had been converted to God at Old Cleens, the most noteworthy was Mrs. Blair. One

* "*Lives of Early Methodist Preachers*," vol. v., p. 318.

of her sons, Andrew, then a thoughtful, studious young man, was brought to a saving knowledge of God, joined the Society, and became one of its brightest ornaments and most acceptable preachers. His talents were of a very high order, his mind was well stored with varied and useful information, especially with Scripture truth, and he was greatly beloved.* George Dice, who entered the Itinerancy in 1780, was converted at about this period; and also Gustavus Armstrong, then a lad of about twelve years of age, and so uniformly upright and consistent was his conduct, that a very shrewd woman, who had known him from infancy, said, 'Gustavus Armstrong was a saint from his birth.'† Other young men also were converted, and joined the Society, who became zealous leaders and local preachers. Amongst these were Matthew Dice and George McDonald, who lived at Old Cleens and John Maguire, the son of the farmer who first

* In 1778, he entered the ministry, filled some of the most important stations both in England and Ireland with great efficiency, and died in triumph, after a comparatively brief ministerial career of fifteen years.

† This amiable man was called into the ministry in 1782, and travelled for forty-five years. He was a man of irreproachable conduct, useful in every Circuit on which he was stationed, and much loved by his brethren in the ministry. He felt a deep interest in the prosperity of Methodism, and by his will left £1,200 to the Irish Conference, to be applied in support of its Ministry. *Irish Evangelist*, 1861, p. 138. *Minutes of Irish Conference*, II., 346-7.

received Mr. Dillon at Aughrim. It was a cause of devout thanksgiving that those who were appointed leaders, and the families by whom the preachers were entertained, continued, without exception, to retain an unabated attachment to Methodism, and to give evidence of growing spiritual life.*

The Gospel message reached various places in the neighbourhood of Sidaire. At Currin, William Henderson and his family embraced the truth ; a Society was formed, and several persons were converted to God. To the north of Ballinamallard, at Tullyrain, two respectable farmers, George and Robert Summerville, received the messenger of mercy : an awakening power attended the Word ; several were led to the Saviour, and a Society formed, of which Robert Summerville became the leader. Subsequently he began to preach, and was made instrumental of much good. He was a man of acute mind, ready wit, and steady attachment to Methodism.

The most distinguished of those who at about this time joined the Society in this Circuit, was James Macdonald, then but a boy. More than half a century after, he used to refer to this period with holy delight. He possessed a clear apprehension, lively imagination, and great readiness of speech. He was brought under the notice of Mr. Wesley, who appointed him to a circuit in 1784. He

* *Irish Evangelist*, 1861, p. 138 ; and *Primitive Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine*, 1839, 398-9.

travelled in the Connexion forty-nine years, with great acceptance and success. He was for a short time Editor of the *Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine*. He was the father of the late eloquent Rev. George B. Macdonald, and grandfather of the Rev. F. W. Macdonald, of the British Conference.

The Gospel was first preached at about this period at Ballyreagh, near Tempo. Mr. William Graham was one of the first who received the preachers, he was converted to God, and became a member of a Class, which met near his residence. Not only were many led to a saving knowledge of the truth, but of these several became most acceptable and useful ministers. In connection with this Society, Thomas Barber,* Joseph Armstrong,† and John Darragh,‡ learned the first principles of religion, and filled the offices of leader and local preacher until they were called into the Itinerancy.

In the neighbourhood of Brookeborough, a gracious

* Thomas Barber was a man of deep piety, ardent zeal, and unostentatious spirit. He was received on trial in 1779, and continued to travel with unabated zeal, receiving many seals to his ministry, until age and infirmities unfitted him for circuit work.

† Joseph Armstrong, before his conversion, was fond of drinking, hunting, racing, and the like. He was appointed to a Circuit in 1783, and laboured for many years with fidelity and success. He was a man of sterling integrity and generous disposition, warm in his friendships, and kind to the poor.

‡ John Darragh entered the ministry in 1787, and travelled nineteen years. His understanding was clear, and his piety genuine, solid, and uniform.

work commenced. Societies were formed at Leitrim, Grogey, Lisadearny, Mountain Top, and other places, and many were able to testify that the Son of Man had power upon earth to forgive sins. Several young men here began to call sinners to repentance. Two of them, Samuel Mitchell and James Rennick, afterwards entered the Itinerancy.

At Clones, James Boyle, to whom allusion has already been made, having realised peace and joy in believing, began at once to work for Christ. He was called upon to assist in prayer meetings, and possessing unmistakable ability, was encouraged both by preachers and people to exercise his talents, and many souls were brought to the Saviour through his instrumentality.* During this year a somewhat remarkable incident occurred in the town. A grave and respectably-dressed person one day called on James Boyle, and told him he was a Methodist preacher, and that if the people were apprized of it, he would preach to them in the evening. The congregation assembled, and the preacher came. He gave out one of Mr. Wesley's hymns, raised the tune, prayed, and then announced for his text, 'For I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.' Having preached an orthodox sermon, until he proposed to describe the blessings that grew from union with Christ, he made a pause, and

* *Methodist Magazine*, Dublin, 1812, pp. 130-1.

said, 'I can go no further. I know nothing of it. I will only say, live in peace and love one another, and the God of love and peace will be with you and bless you!' At the next market day he appeared on a stage as a mountebank doctor, and what further became of him is not known.*

A very gracious revival attended the labour of the preachers in the county of Monaghan. Numerous Societies were formed, and amongst the rest at Gola and Clontoe. At the former the Itinerants were entertained by Mr. John Whitley, and at the latter by Mr. Kyte. Mr. Whitley (grandfather of the Messrs. Whitley, of Enniskillen, and the Messrs. Grayden, of New York) at one time entertained the idea of entering the ministry, and in 1774, received an appointment from the Conference, but owing to domestic circumstances was unable to enter upon it. John Smith arrived at a part of the county about eight miles from Clones, and the Word preached by him there was accompanied with mighty power. Large numbers were convinced of sin; and so deep was their distress, that it was said of him that he sent the people mad. This, together with the novelty of his doctrines and his intense earnestness, brought many to hear him, and amongst the rest, a young woman named Catherine Stuart. She went on one occasion with some friends to the appointed place of meeting, and was greatly disappointed on hearing that Mr. Smith had been

* *Irish Evangelist*, 1861, p. 193.

unable to attend, having sent John Price, from Tonyloman, as his substitute. They arrived a little before the time of commencing the service, and found the local preacher sitting with an open Bible in his hand, speaking to those present, and frequently appealing to the Book. Amongst other things, he said, 'Before my conversion I used to dispute with John Smith, but never found myself at such a loss as when he read these words,—“Behold, what manner of love,”’ etc.; and on saying this, the young evangelist looked on his audience with such tenderness and earnestness that even the look reached Catherine's heart, but she slighted the feeling of conviction that arose in her mind. During the sermon, such was the conflict of her mind, that at length, unable to restrain her feelings, she cried aloud in bitter anguish, and then sank insensible on the floor. On her return home, her mother was so annoyed that she corrected her severely, forbade her going to the Methodist meetings, and confined her to the house. At length Catherine, having heard that a love-feast was about to be held at Clones,—the first meeting of the kind ever held there,—she determined to go, and with a friend set out on the night previous to the day of meeting. Her mother pursued her, and arrived in town before the service began, but in compliance with the earnest appeal of her daughter, consented to go with her. The meeting was held in the *Market House*, and at its close, mother and daughter

were invited to partake of the refreshments provided by the Society for those who had come from a distance. The opportunity was seized by the preachers of speaking faithfully to Mrs. Stuart, who at length consented to allow her daughter liberty of conscience, and she soon after, being justified by faith, obtained peace with God. She was spared for more than half a century, during which she maintained her confidence, although called upon to suffer, on account of her religious profession, persecution of a peculiarly painful as well as protracted nature.*

When John Smith preached on one occasion in Clones, amongst his hearers was William M'Cornock, a native of the County of Donegal, then about twenty-six years of age. He had received a liberal education, and at one time taught a school, and at another acted as a surveyor. He, however, fell into intemperance and other sins, and lived in rebellion against God for several years. Such was his character when he heard John Smith preach. He was greatly surprised when he was told of the very defective education which the preacher had received, and was led to desire a personal acquaintance with him. Soon after an opportunity offered, when the devoted evangelist narrated to the sinner what manner of life he himself had lived, and what God had done for his soul. William M'Cornock

* *Primitive Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine*, 1830, pp. 258-66.

listened to the marvellous story till deep conviction of his own sinfulness and folly was followed by an earnest desire for salvation. At length God manifested Himself in mercy to His soul. He at once engaged in the Lord's work. Notwithstanding persecution and the strenuous efforts of his friends to lead him back into his former course, he could not be moved. He became valiant for the truth, and proved instrumental in turning many from the error of their ways, including some of the most ignorant and wicked in the part of the country in which he lived. In 1779, he was called into the Itinerancy, and God abundantly blessed his labours both in his native land and in the West Indies.*

Laborious as was the work during this year, the servants of God received ample compensation in seeing the work of the Lord prosper in their hands; two hundred and sixty-eight members were added to the Society.

* *Arminian Magazine*, 1785, pp. 77-80, 135-139, and 186-189



CHAPTER XI.

GENERAL MISSION: 1772-73.

IN the List of Stations for 1772 the name of John Smith does not appear, it being arranged that he should be set free from Circuit-work to travel through the country as a Missionary. His duty was to conduct open-air services, to avail himself of new openings to preach the Gospel, and to engage in revival work as he had opportunity. He was the first preacher appointed as 'a general Missionary' in Ireland after Methodism had been in some measure consolidated. Five years later, the celebrated Rev. Edward Smyth was employed by Mr. Wesley in a similar capacity in Ireland, and therefore may be regarded as the second general Missionary; his name also does not appear in the published *Minutes of the Conference*. The work was just that for which John Smith was specially adapted, which was most needed in this country, and which he himself desired; but it was

of such a nature that it is impossible now to trace its course. He went about visiting and preaching in the towns, villages, mountains, and glens of almost every part of Ulster, as a pioneer in the moral deserts of that province, and many were those brought to Christ who, in all probability, would otherwise never have been reached. He was always, as he called it, 'on the recruiting service.' He did not like to be bound to remain on any particular Circuit. He had a special sympathy for those in humble circumstances. He said, 'The highways and hedges afforded him his best game.' Yet some persons of wealth were deeply impressed under his ministry, and led to inquire the way to Zion. His own conversion being the result of outdoor preaching, he seldom stood forth as a herald of Christ indoors when a suitable opportunity was afforded in the open air. His stalwart frame and powerful voice, his pointed and animated style, together with a never-failing tact in turning passing circumstances to account, specially fitted him for this work. His eye was single; he lived in the light of eternity, and had little interest comparatively in anything but the one great business of life. He gladly availed himself of a shower of rain, or any other trivial excuse, to enter a strange house that he might lead some to the Saviour. When he found any persons serious and attentive he either sang a hymn or offered prayer, and often the home-circle would be melted into tears as he thus told of

the Saviour's love, and pleaded with God for a blessing. Then he requested them to bring in their neighbours and friends that they also might hear the good news from heaven; and thus numbers who had known nothing previously of the blessings of salvation were convinced of sin and converted to God.

On one occasion John Smith was benighted on a mountain path in the County of Antrim, and lost his way. At length he saw a glimmering light at some distance, and went towards it, leading his horse. Having reached the house, he was at once made welcome. The family were about to retire for the night, but the good woman would not permit him to go to bed without supper. He, in a short time, directed conversation to the necessity of being born again. The members of the family listened with attention, but would not admit that such a change was needful. The preacher then brought out his Testament and proved his statement. The hearers, almost convinced, still hesitated; perceiving which, John Smith sang a hymn, and poured out his soul in prayer. Soon the mother and two of her daughters began to cry aloud for mercy, and he continued wrestling with God until four of the eight members of the family were enabled to rejoice in God their Saviour. He remained in this house for three days, and formed a little Society.

A remarkable incident, which occurred at Gort-

naleg, shows the estimate in which John Smith was held by the people there. A woman named Peggy Gregg, a worthy member of the Society, fell ill of fever, and her case was considered hopeless. As her sorrowing family awaited her death, she placed her hand under her head, fell into a quiet sleep, in which she continued for about six hours, then awoke, and inquired if John Smith were there. Being informed that he was not, she said, 'He has been at the bedside with me, and asked me if I had faith in God. I said I could trust in Him for all things. He then desired me to put my hand under my head, and I should soon be well; I thought I did so, and now I am as free from fever as I ever was in my life.' Having said which, she got up, dressed herself, partook of some food with evident relish, and had no return of the disease.

At the time the above incident occurred, John Smith was at Ballinasloe, and stopped in the house of a Mr. K——.* At about midnight his host rushed into his room, and, thinking that he was asleep, shouted to him to escape for his life, for the back premises were on fire, and the dwelling-house

* Probably Mr. John Knight, who then resided in the town, but afterwards lived at Cloonburren. He was truly devoted to God. There is one person now resident in Ballinasloe who can recall having seen him more than sixty years ago, when he was accustomed to ride in to the ten o'clock service each Sunday morning, irrespective of weather, *although then about ninety years of age.*

would soon catch the flames; but the servant of God was at prayer, and calmly replied, 'Don't be alarmed, your dwelling-house will be preserved.' Just then the wind changed, so as to blow the flames from the house instead of towards it as previously, and thus the prediction was fulfilled.

John Smith, being once asked how it was that he preached with so much success, having received such a defective education, he replied that he got his sermons 'red-hot from heaven.' No wonder, then, that it has often been said of him that he was the most successful preacher of his day in promoting the revival of the Lord's work.

On another occasion he went to Knockmanoul much weighed down in spirit, having heard that the Society there had not retained its fervour. On arriving at Molly Gregg's,* he immediately inquired for his room, into which he entered without delay, shut the door, and spread his case before the Lord. It seemed to him for some time as if the Lord hid His face; but he persevered, and so absorbed was he in prayer that he was deaf to repeated calls to dinner. The day drew to a close, and his door remained unopened. At length Molly Gregg, whose kind heart could not brook the idea of the preacher fasting for such a length of time, opened the door, and found him so earnestly pleading with God as to be unconscious of her presence. Shortly after she again entered, and said: 'The

* Mrs. Graham.

house is filled with people, and many are outside unable to get in.' Whereon he leaped to his feet in exultation, saying: 'Oh, Molly Gregg, I have got it, and will now go and deliver my message.' During the subsequent service the Spirit of God descended in mighty power: sixteen souls were converted, and a gracious work commenced, which is said to have been 'the most extensive revival in the north of Ireland.'*

Most likely in connection with this blessed work a persecution arose at this period, which for its virulence, the extent of country over which it spread, its duration, and its fatal results, has no parallel in the history of Methodism in Ireland. Men professing to be zealous sons of the Church, proclaimed the doctrines of the forgiveness of sins and the witness of the Spirit to be deadly errors. Abusive language, dirt, stones, and clubs were the arguments they employed. A man might swear, tell lies, get drunk, indulge in all manner of licentiousness, and yet, if he went to church occasionally, be deemed by priest and people a good Christian; but if he began to read his Bible regularly, to pray in his family or with his neighbours, to reprove sin, or to listen to the preaching of the Methodists, he became an object of reproach and hatred, was set up as a mark to be shot at, and treated as the filth and off-scouring of the earth. Almost every

* Unpublished MS. in the possession of the Rev. W. G. Campbell, A. M.

hand was uplifted against the Methodists. The aristocracy opposed them ; the Clergy, both in and out of the pulpit, railed at them ; and the magistrates, in general, not only denied them a hearing, but in some instances were amongst their most bitter persecutors. The bonds of friendship were severed, family ties broken, and young men and women driven from the homes of their fathers to seek shelter elsewhere. The preachers especially were the objects of hatred and malignity. In some instances brave men, armed with guns and bayonets, and carrying a supply of provisions, escorted the servants of God, travelling by by-roads in order to escape attacks from lawless mobs: Mr. G. Irvine, of Magheralough, and others, often thus acted as a body-guard to the Itinerants. In Belturbet, a servant of Satan resolved to stand inside a door at the end of the market-house, and to slam it in the face of John Smith as soon as he approached ; but just as the servant of God drew near, a sudden gust of wind drove the door so violently against the man, that he himself was thrown down on his back, and so bruised that he was a long time in recovering. Two members of the Society at Tonymolman were so beaten that they died from the effects. This attracted public attention, and the perpetrators of the outrage were arrested at the instance of Mr. Nixon, a magistrate.*

* Unpublished MS. in the hands of the Rev. W. G. Campbell, A.M.

Warnings of danger sometimes came from unlikely quarters. Thus John Smith was on his way to preach at a hamlet a little distance from Swanlinbar; in going to which it was needful to cross a large bog, and also a river, which was much swollen, but spanned by a bridge. He was met by a woman, who told him a mob was waiting at the bridge to ill-treat him. At first he disregarded the warning, because she had been accustomed previously to make use of abusive language to him. The woman, however, called to him a second time, and this made him hesitate to proceed. The place where he intended to preach was about a mile before him, and instead of going by the bridge, he spurred his horse, leaped a hedge, swam the river, crossed a part of the bog, which even in summer was dangerous, and reached his destination in safety. He preached to the people, and having ascertained that his persecutors, thinking he would be compelled to return by the bridge at night, waited there to accomplish their malicious purpose, he returned in safety by the same perilous way as that by which he had gone. Mr. Dixon, who narrates this incident, adds that John Smith 'was a man of as much prayer as I ever knew, while in faith I have known none to equal him.'*

The junior preacher on the Enniskillen Circuit, John M'Burney, a young man from Waterford, who

* Unpublished autobiography of Thomas Dixon, in possession of the Rev. Luke Tyerman.

had just entered the ministry, and was characterized by a gentle and unobtrusive spirit, preached one day in the market-place at Clones. Many attended, and a gracious influence was realized; but some ungodly men, chiefly Roman Catholics, assembled and greatly disturbed and annoyed the congregation, so that it was feared that the place must be given up, as no magistrate would interfere. Just when this fear was at its highest, a very unexpected and strange occurrence took place. An old military pensioner, a Presbyterian, surprised the preacher and congregation by taking his stand beside a tree in the centre of the market-place, with musket in hand, and swore that he would shoot the first man that would pass that tree to disturb the preacher. Not one of the rioters, although they shouted at a distance, attempted to pass the prescribed limit. The rough old soldier mounted guard regularly every Sabbath afternoon for some weeks, until all opposition ceased.*

The young preacher, however, soon after fell a victim to the cruelty of his persecutors elsewhere. On the evening of March 4th, 1773, he conducted a service at Mr. Perry's, near Brookeborough, and while singing a hymn, a large mob surrounded the house, and six of them, armed with clubs, rushed in and fell upon the people; but they were thrust out, and the door fastened. On this the rioters broke the windows and threw in a large quantity of

* *Life of the Rev. Henry Moore*, pp. 48, 49.

stones. They then broke into the house through the wall, and hauling out both men and women, beat them without mercy. They dragged out Mr. M'Burney, and when he attempted to rise, a Mr. N—— knocked him down. They continued beating him on the head and breast as he lay senseless on the ground, yet after awhile, coming to himself, he got up; but being too weak to stand, he staggered and fell. Then one of the mob set his foot on his face, swearing he would 'tread the Holy Ghost out of him,' and another thrust a stick into his mouth. From the effects of this ill-treatment he never recovered.

Mr. Mitchell, who lived about a mile from the town, was one of those who were basely maltreated. and his house was attacked by a riotous mob on the following Saturday, who threw large stones at the windows and broke the door. Mr. Perry and Mr. Mitchell then obtained warrants for the apprehension of some of the rioters, but the constable would not execute them. At the following Assizes in Enniskillen, the grand jury threw out all the bills. Such was the administration of justice in Fermanagh, which tended only to encourage a spirit of persecution.

A Methodist preacher could not pass through the Protestant town of Enniskillen without endangering his life. On May 24th, 1773, Mr. Wesley, having preached at Tonymoman, set out for Sidaire, accompanied by the Circuit Ministers, James Hud-

son, John Watson, and Michael M'Donald. One of his horses having a shoe loose, he borrowed Mr. Watson's steed, and left him with his chaise. Having to pass through Enniskillen, when they came near the town, some masons at work at the west bridge gave them some coarse words. The vituperation increased as they proceeded, but many soldiers being in the street, who received the preachers with respect, the mob shrunk back. An hour after Mr. Watson followed in the carriage; but before he arrived at the bridge, which had been blocked up with large stones, many ran together and began to pelt him with whatever came to hand, but an old man cried out, 'Is this the way you treat strangers?' and rolled away the stones. The mob quickly rewarded him by plastering him over with mortar from head to foot. They then fell upon the chaise, which was cut with stones in several places and well-nigh covered with dirt and mortar. From one end of the town to the other, the stones flew thick about the coachman's head; some of them were of two or three pounds weight.

Next day, the preachers returned from Sidaire *en route* for Roosky, and as they passed the eastern end of Enniskillen, both men and women greeted them with abusive language, together with dirt and stones; but the steeds of the itinerants soon left their persecutors far behind. John Smith came to the town about an hour later. The masons at the west bridge, having seen him approaching, prepared

at once for an onslaught upon him. He was afraid that his horse would leap into the river, and therefore alighted. He made his way through the midst of them, although much wounded.*

Thus this Methodistic year closed in the midst of fierce persecution, notwithstanding which the good cause prospered. Many souls were saved, the spiritual life of the Societies was deepened, and the net addition during the twelve months in the province of Ulster was nine hundred and forty-one members, of whom two hundred and twenty-three were in the Enniskillen Circuit.† ‘So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.’

* Wesley's *Journal*, May 24th and 25th, 1773.

† These statistics, as well as others already given, are not to be regarded as presenting anything like an adequate idea of the results of the labours of John Smith and his brother Itinerants. It was computed that in 1773 and the five preceding years, the North of Ireland was drained of one-fourth of its population by emigration to the American settlements. These emigrants were chiefly from the agricultural districts, where Methodism had proved most successful.



CHAPTER XII.

GENERAL MISSION: 1773-4

'Soldier, rise—the war is done ;
Lo ! the hosts of hell are flying :
'Twas thy Lord the battle won,
Jesus conquered them by dying.
Pass the stream—before thee lies
All the conquered land of glory ;
Hark ! what songs of rapture rise,
These proclaim the victor's story.
Soldier, lay thy weapons down,
Quit the sword and take the crown ;
Triumph ! all thy foes are banished,
Death is slain, and earth has vanished.'

AT the Conference of 1773, John Smith seems to have been re-appointed to the general mission work. He was then threescore years old, and time and hard work had left their mark on his once powerful frame ; but his spirit was as buoyant as ever, and his zeal and devotion had continually increased in intensity. Deeply

conscious of his only source of strength, he often spent great part of the night, as well as the day, in fervent supplications, so that his knees became callous from frequent and protracted prayer.* Thus, though the 'outward man' perished, the 'inward man' was 'renewed day by day.' Walking and riding on the public road, and in the social circle, he was about his 'Father's business;' and even in sleep he spake of the things of God. His fidelity and zeal exposed him to much misrepresentation and reproach; but—

'He loved the world that hated him; the tear
That fell upon his Bible was sincere :
Assailed by scandal and the tongue of strife,
His only answer was a blameless life.'

Numerous and remarkable were the interpositions of Divine providence and grace on his behalf, and special and supernatural were the gifts with which he was at times endowed.

Once when John Smith went to Gortnaleg, he was so hoarse that he could not speak above a whisper. He knew not what to do when he saw Peter Taylor's large barn filled with people hungering for the Bread of Life, and he groaned within himself. At length he said with intense earnestness: 'Lord, be Thou wisdom and utterance to Thy poor, weary, and afflicted servant, and speak by Thy Spirit to this people.' Immediately all the

* *Irish Evangelist*, 1860, p. 89.

people fell on their knees and pleaded for a present blessing. Meanwhile, John Smith continued wrestling with God, until nineteen souls were led to the Saviour.

One Sunday morning, John Smith was walking through Larne to the preaching place, when as he passed a public-house, Captain W——d——, of a merchant vessel then about to sail, rushed out, and with a volley of oaths swore he would not leave him until they had had drink together; and then, for the diversion of the assembled idlers, attempted to drag him along. John Smith being a strong man, soon wrested himself out of the hands of his persecutor. The skipper then followed him to the place of meeting, and behaved in such a noisy manner that it was impossible to proceed with the service. The profane sailor, exulting in having silenced the preacher, returned to his vessel, and was quietly followed to the Curran * by John Smith, who having observed passengers on board, solemnly warned them not to proceed on their journey, saying, ‘God has a controversy with that man for blaspheming His holy name, and mocking His ordinances, and will surely punish him.’ Some attended to the warning, and returned on shore; but others only laughed at the prediction. Soon after, a favourable gale having arisen, the vessel sailed, with passengers and crew apparently in high spirits, but subsequently was never heard of again. The captain’s

* The name of the quay at Larne.

widow, convinced by such an awful visitation of the truth of religion, became a member of the Society, was converted to God, and for many years entertained the preachers in her house.

Such is substantially the narrative as given by David Smith, and also by the Rev. W. P. Burgess, M.A.* It demands further confirmation or modification. It is hardly credible that the Lord would thus punish so many innocent persons on account of the ravings of one poor inebriate. From a careful examination of the shipping records of the north of Ireland, and of Charlestown, it appears that a brigantine called *The Betty*, Captain Woodside, sailed from Larne with passengers for Charlestown, about the end of October, 1773, and this answers the above description. Her voyage was an unusually protracted and perilous one, as she did not arrive at her destination until 28th February following, thus continuing for four months at sea. It can well be understood that as the tidings of her arrival did not reach this country until some time after the death of John Smith, it was believed by him and others that she had perished with all on board.

Some readers may be disposed to doubt the truth and reality of the supernatural communications which are said to have been made to this devoted servant of God, or to think that he only fancied such things, and attributed them to a Divine

* *Irish Evangelist*, 1860, p. 89.

source. It is doubtless contrary to the experience of Christians in general that they should be able, even occasionally, to announce distinctly and in detail events beyond the range of their observation, and the reach of their powers of reasoning, as John Smith did in reference to the landing of the French and the disastrous voyage of the *Betty*. But who can tell to what extent God may honour a faithful servant, or what seals He may give to his ministry? Only those who have attained to the same piety, and have been placed in similar circumstances, are capable of judging in this matter.

A brief and fitful effort will not suffice to place us in the position of John Smith with regard to the spiritual world. We must persevere long in earnest and believing prayer, and bring to the task the sustained self-denial and untiring diligence which characterized him; and even then we can only look up and ask God to—

‘Speak to these curious hearts of ours,
And teach them to be still.
God hath His mysteries of grace,
Ways that we cannot tell;
He hides them deep, like the secret sleep
Of him He loved so well.’

The persecution in the Enniskillen Circuit, to which reference has been made, at length grew so violent that its malignity compelled the reluctant authorities to take active measures for the preservation of life and property; but not until some of

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their own houses had been broken into by midnight marauders, and they had found that their own persons and possessions were in danger. Then the magistrates began to manifest some sympathy with the persecuted Christians; and severe punishment was inflicted on the violators of the law. Many of those who had taken a leading part in the persecution sought to escape the consequences of their misdeeds by emigration or by enlisting in the army; while others, to veil their former conduct, became zealous in running with the altered tide of popular feeling.*

But this fierce and terrible persecution did not come to an end until after John Smith had fallen a victim to its violence. In 1774, as the devoted Evangelist rode to Charlemont to attend the March Quarterly Meeting, a man named Nixon, a bailiff to a gentleman at Aghintain, near Clogher, waylaid him and struck him on the back of the head with a pitchfork, knocking him down, and then so maltreated him as to leave him apparently dead. But so intent was he on doing his Master's work that, weak and suffering as he was, he managed to get to Charlemont for the service, and there became so exhausted that he was obliged to retire to the house of a kind widow, a Mrs. Richardson, where he lingered for a few days. For some time he was in great distress of mind; but soon the clouds were dispelled, and his soul was filled with joy unspeak-

* *Irish Evangelist*, 1861, p. 194.

able. His pain of body was great, but the love of Christ so overflowed his heart as at times to render him almost insensible to bodily sufferings. For about twelve hours he scarcely ceased praising and glorifying God, until his room was a very heaven on earth. At length, as nature gradually sank, Samuel Bates repeated the words: 'Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word: for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation;' and the spirit of the saint passed hence to join the glorious company 'which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.' Many who heard the dying testimony of this devoted Christian were led thereby to religious decision, and thus in death as in life he glorified God. John Smith 'fell in the heat of the battle vanquished, and yet a conqueror.'

About three months previously, a new preaching-house had been erected and opened at Charlemont, and thither the body of the saint was carried. Solemn and impressive services were held, at which many were 'baptized for the dead.' The remains were then interred in the old graveyard at Leger Hill: in what precise part cannot now be determined, as there is not even a stone to mark the place. But his 'record is on high;' and his memorial is found in the many who have been led to the Saviour as the result of his devoted life. 'Ye,' says the apostle Paul, appealing to the Churches

which had risen into being by the benediction of heaven on his labours,—‘Ye are our epistles.’ So even at this day, in many a Church rise the memorials of John Smith’s apostleship.

We may learn from what he accomplished and the means by which it was effected, what we also may do if only faithful.

Who can contemplate, without profound emotion, the spectacle of this humble, illiterate man, struggling, often single-handed, against the mass of ignorance and wickedness around him, yet crowned with glorious success?

Reader, be not satisfied with merely a passing sense of admiration, or even a momentary wish to be like him, but cultivate an intense desire for spiritual power, which is certain to be satisfied, and put forth such faithful, self-denying, persevering efforts for the well-being of others as cannot fail to be crowned with like success.

‘Rouse to this work of pure and holy love,
And thou an angel’s happiness shalt know,—
Shalt bless the earth, while in the world above
The good begun by thee shall onward flow
In many a branching stream, and wider grow.
The seed that in these few and fleeting hours
Thy hands unsparing and unwearied sow,
Shall deck thy grave with amaranthine flowers,
And yield thee fruits divine in heaven’s immortal bowers.’



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